Grade – 3:

Reading skills

The No Pets Apartment:

***Build lesson:***

Sam wanted a pet. A little one. A big one. One that flew or walked. Any kind of pet at all.

But Mrs. Cabot, the landlady, said: “NO PETS!” And that was that.

Sam’s mom and dad bought him fuzzy stuffed bears and a kite in the shape of a kitten and a plastic parrot on a stick. But he wanted a *live* pet. And that was that.

Sam tried to change Mrs. Cabot’s mind. He told her he would get a quiet pet. He told her he would keep it clean. He told her he would not let the pet scratch the woodwork or jump through the hedges.

But Mrs. Cabot looked Sam square in the eye and said: “NO PETS!”

One day Sam heard Mrs. Cabot screaming in the hallway. He rushed over. “What’s wrong, Mrs. Cabot?”

“A mouse!” she shrieked. “I saw a mouse!”

“I thought you had a rule, Mrs. Cabot. No pets allowed.”

“It wasn’t a *pet* mouse,” the landlady squawked. “It was a plain old terrorize-the-building type of mouse.”

Sam grinned. “What you need, Mrs. Cabot, is a cat.”

While it was true that Mrs. Cabot hated cats, there was something she hated even more—mice! And so that very day, Mrs. Cabot went to the animal shelter and found herself a cat.

The next time Sam saw Mrs. Cabot, he said, “I see you have a cat.” “Yes indeed,” she replied. “Does that mean I can get a pet?” Sam asked.

“No, it does not!” snapped Mrs. Cabot. “If I let you get a pet, I’d have to let everyone get a pet. Then I’d be running a zoo and not an apartment building!”

Another day Sam was coming home from school. Police cars surrounded the apartment building. “What happened, Mrs. Cabot?” he asked.

“I was robbed!” she cried. “They took my radio and my penny bank and my entire collection of salt and pepper shakers!”

“That’s too bad,” said Sam, shaking his head. “What you need is a good watchdog.”

While it was true that Mrs. Cabot hated dogs, there was something she hated even more—robbers! And so that very day, Mrs. Cabot went to the kennel and bought herself a dog.

A week later Sam found Mrs. Cabot dusting the stairs. There were tears in her eyes.

“You look sad,” said Sam.

“I *am* sad,” replied Mrs. Cabot. “My very best friend in all the world is moving away.”

“I’m sorry to hear that,” said Sam. “She and I would talk for hours,” sniffled Mrs. Cabot. “Can’t you talk to Mr. Cabot?” asked Sam.

Mrs. Cabot shook her head. “Mr. Cabot likes to read the newspaper. He likes to watch TV. He likes to build shelves for his wrench collection. But he doesn’t like to talk.’’

“What you need, Mrs. Cabot, is a parrot.”

Mrs. Cabot dabbed at her eyes with the hem of her apron. “A parrot?”

Sam nodded. “Parrots love to talk.”

While it was true that Mrs. Cabot hated birds, there was something she hated even more—not having anyone to talk with.

And so that very day, Mrs. Cabot went to The Exotic Bird Shop and bought herself a parrot that talked all the way home.

In spring the grass grew green and thick and tall. Mrs. Cabot tried to mow the lawn, but every time she pushed the mower, she sneezed.

“Bless you,” said Sam.

“Thank you,” said Mrs. Cabot, between sneezes.

“Do you have a cold?” Sam asked.

Mrs. Cabot blew her nose. Sneezed. Pushed the mower. Then sneezed again. “No. I have allergies.”

“You shouldn’t be mowing grass, then,” said Sam.

“I know that,” replied Mrs. Cabot, sneezing. “But Mr. Cabot hurt his back. So he can’t mow the grass.”

“Maybe I could,” offered Sam.

“That’s kind of you,” said Mrs. Cabot. “But you’re too small.”

Sam smiled. “I know just what you need.”

“What’s that?” asked Mrs. Cabot.

“A goat!” Sam laughed. “A goat will eat every bit of grass. You’ll never have to mow again.”

While it was true that Mrs. Cabot hated goats, there was something she hated even more—sneezing! And so that very day, she drove to a farm and came back with a goat.

A month later Sam found Mrs. Cabot hammering a For Sale sign into the front lawn.

“Are you selling the building?” asked Sam.

“I don’t want to,” sighed Mrs. Cabot. “But I’m so busy taking care of the cat and the dog and the parrot and the goat that I don’t have time for anything else. The laundry room is full of cobwebs. The stairs are full of dust. And as for the hedges—well, see for yourself.”

Sam patted Mrs. Cabot on the shoulder. “What you need is a pet-sitter.”

Mrs. Cabot stopped hammering. “But who on earth would take care of all those pets?”

Sam’s grin was as wide as a wheelbarrow. “I know just the person,” he said. “And he even lives in the building!”

Questions:

1. The author most likely wrote the passage to

A) tell a funny story about pets

B) describe how to choose a pet

C)explain how to take care of pets

D) convince the reader to buy a pet

2. Where do the events in the passage take place?

A) at a hotel

B) at a house

C) at an animal shelter

D) at an apartment building

3. Which of these things does Sam want?

A) a live pet

B) a teddy bear

C) a plastic parrot on a stick

D) a kite in the shape of a kitten

4. Mrs. Cabot says that if she lets Sam have a pet, she will have to

A) visit a zoo

B) feed the pet

C) let everyone get a pet

D) sell the apartment building

5. Read this sentence from the passage.

“No, it does not!”

Another way to write does not is

A) doesnt

B) doesn’t

C) does’nt

D) doesnot

6. Read this sentence from the passage.

“I saw a mouse!”

Which of these words means more than one mouse?

￼￼￼￼￼￼￼￼￼A) mice

B) mices

C) mouses

D) mousies

7. Read this sentence from the passage.

Police cars surrounded the apartment building.

In this sentence, surrounded means about the same as

￼￼￼A) honked at

B) drove past

C) bumped into

D) circled around

￼￼￼￼￼￼8. Read the sentences below.

Because of the mouse, Mrs. Cabot buys a cat.

Because of the robbers, Mrs. Cabot buys a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Which animal belongs in the blank?

A)dog

B)goat

C)kitten

D)parrot

9. Why does Mrs. Cabot buy a parrot?

￼￼￼￼￼￼￼A) Her cat is lonely.

B) Mr. Cabot is bored.

C) Sam is going to camp.

D) Her best friend is moving.

￼￼￼￼￼￼10 Mr. Cabot does not like to

￼￼A) watch TV

B) build shelves

C) talk to others

D) read the newspaper

11. Which of these words does not describe Sam?

￼A) clever

B) helpful

C) nice

D) lazy

12. Mrs. Cabot puts up a For Sale sign because

A) she wants a bigger home

B) she is too busy with her pets

C) she is angry because everyone has pets

D) she does not want to clean the laundry room

13. At the end of the passage, Sam hopes

￼A) to be the pet-sitter

B) to get a stuffed bear

C) to get a new landlady

D) to move to a new apartment building

14. Read this sentence from the passage.

Sam’s grin was as wide as a wheelbarrow.

This is the author’s way of saying that

1. Sam likes gardening
2. Sam has a big smile
3. Sam needs to see a dentist
4. Sam does not like to smile

Grade – 4:

The Story of the two brothers

Two large mountains face each other across Pago Pago (PANG-go PANG-go) Harbor on the island of Tutuila (too-too-EE-la) in American Samoa. They are known as the Two Brothers: Matafao (mah-tah-FAH-oo) and Pioa (pee-OH-ah), the Rainmaker. The story of how they came to be is told and retold to children throughout the islands. It contains an important message.

Long ago, a man had two sons. He loved both children dearly, as fathers will. One he called Matafao; the other, Pioa. As small boys, they fought constantly. As they grew to manhood, their fights became ever fiercer and more frequent.

Time passed. The father grew gray and old. Tired of listening to his sons fight with each other, he began to despair. He knew the time was drawing near when he would leave them. What would become of his angry children?

The day came when he called Pioa and Matafao to him. This is what he told them, “My heart is heavy inside me. It seems you cannot love each other as brothers should. In fact, you cannot be together without one of you starting a fight. The only solution I can see is to separate you forever. Therefore, from this day forward, you will live apart from each other. Pioa, you shall live in the east,” he said. “Matafao, you will live in the west. Perhaps the sea will be wide enough to keep you from fighting when I could not.”

And then he added, “Should either of you manage to start a fight, you will be turned into stone on the spot where you stand.”

Soon, the old man died.

Although the two brothers could not seem to love each other, they both loved their father. Their grief for him was great. In fact, they found they were unable to eat. Had their sadness continued, they surely would have sickened and died, too.

With the passage of time, grief lessens. So, it was with them. The two brothers found themselves happy again. They decided to host a feast. They would roast a whole pig and many chickens. They would boil taro and bake a cake with so many tiers, it would be fine enough for the finest Samoan wedding.

Matafao and Pioa ate well at their feast. In fact, Matafao may have eaten a little too well. He decided to climb a cliff, and look over his lush green island.

At that moment, high above their heads, a seabird picked up a rock and, raising his great wings, took to the skies. When a wind sprang up, the rock slipped from his claws. Hurling down the cliff, it struck Pioa on the top of his head.

Pioa looked up. Being so quick to anger, he blamed his brother, not the seabird or the wind.

“It is your fault, Matafao!” Pioa screamed. “You threw the rock!” With that, he picked up a stone and threw it at his brother.

At those angry and unjust words, Matafao also got angry and threw some rocks. One knocked off Pioa’s top. It fell into the sea with a giant splash, and lies there to this day, a small, rocky island.

As when a volcano erupts, rocks began to fly between the brothers. Only then did they remember their father’s warning: Whoever starts another fight will be turned into stone.

Too late, they found their father’s words were true. Their lower limbs had hardened and turned to stone.

Matafao realized then that fighting with his brother was wrong. He stopped and begged his brother to stop as well. Pioa’s rage was too great and he refused and continued to fight.

“Stop, Brother. I beg you,” Matafao pleaded again. When he realized his words were ignored, he fought back.

It was at that moment that Pioa and Matafao became the mountains known as the Two Brothers. Pioa, humbled by his own wrongdoings, stands the smaller of the two. The dark cloud that hovers over his head brings rain to the islands and remains as a reminder to Samoan children to love one another.

Questions:

1. This passage is mainly about

1. making friends with others
2. children helping their parents
3. learning to get along together
4. being happy with what you have

2. How much time does it take for the events in this story to occur?

1. a few days
2. several weeks
3. several months
4. many years

3. Read this sentence from the passage.

Tired of listening to his sons fight with

each other, he began to despair.

In this sentence the word despair

means

1. argue
2. complain
3. lose hope
4. make excuses

4. What does the father mean when he says, “My heart is heavy inside me”?

1. He knows his sons do not love him.
2. He knows his sons have made him ill.
3. He is very sad that his sons are still fighting.
4. He cannot love his sons if they keep fighting.

5. Which of these events happens right after the two brothers lose their father?

1. They move apart.
2. They plan a big feast.
3. They are unable to eat.
4. They try to love one another.

6. Matafao decides to climb a cliff after the feast because he wants to

1. look over his beautiful island
2. watch his brother from above
3. find the nesting area of the seabird
4. get away from his brother for a while

7. Why is Pioa unable to stop fighting near the end of the passage?

1. He is too angry.
2. He knows he was right.
3. His brother is winning the fight.
4. His brother keeps attacking him.

8. Why do Pioa and Matafao turn to stone?

1. They bring shame to the island people.
2. They begin to fight with each other again.
3. They anger a seabird and it punishes them.
4. They eat and drink too much at a large feast.

9. The main mistake the brothers make is

1. being sad for a long time
2. living apart from each other
3. eating too much at their feast
4. ignoring their father’s warning

10. Why is this story most likely told to children throughout the Samoan Islands?

1. to teach an important lesson
2. to explain how to prepare a feast
3. to warn about the behavior of seabirds
4. to describe how mountains sometimes form

**Smokey Bear - A National Symbol:**

The worst fire in the history of Lincoln National Forest, New Mexico, raged for weeks in 1950. When the flames were out, when the thunder and crackle of blazing trees had died down, a badly burned bear cub was found clinging to a tree. A weary firefighter snapped his picture, then rescued the hurting and bewildered cub.

The rangers named him Smokey after the familiar poster character. Smokey Bear, a cartoon bear in a ranger’s hat and blue jeans holding a shovel. He had been created in1944 by the U.S. Forest Service to publicize a campaign to prevent forest fires. Posters of the cartoon bear read “Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires!” and were tacked up in every national forest and park as well as in public buildings.

Then the real Smokey came along. The rangers nursed him back to health and sent him to the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. Photographs of the badly burned cub, his playful recovery, and his life in Washington sent the popularity of the cartoon Smokey Bear skyrocketing.

With all the publicity, the living Smokey Bear became one of the most popular animals at the National Zoo. Thousands of visitors dropped by to see the black bear who limped on one leg and still bore scars from the fire that some careless camper or smoker had started. Smokey’s misfortune became the best reason for preventing forest fires. He even made public appearances. Eventually he had his own Smokey Bear fan club. Membership was in the many thousands. Children who signed up to be Junior Forest Rangers received not only a Ranger kit but an official-looking badge and pictures of the real and the cartoon Smokeys.

In May 1975, when he was twenty-five years old (which is equal to seventy in human years), the National Zoo and the Forest Service retired Smokey in an impressive ceremony. At the same time, they introduced Smokey Junior, an orphan of another fire in Lincoln National Forest. Smokey Senior died a year later. His remains were buried at the Smokey Bear Historical Park in Lincoln National Forest, and today his message lives on: “Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires!”

Questions:

1. Which of these events happened first?

1. ￼￼A Smokey Bear fan club was started.
2. Smokey was retired in a special ceremony.
3. A cub called Smokey Junior was introduced.
4. The poster character of Smokey was created.

￼￼￼￼￼￼2. Which of these sentences states the main idea of the passage?

1. Forest rangers rescued Smokey Bear from a fire.
2. Smokey Bear became a popular symbol for fire safety.
3. Many people visited Smokey Bear at the National Zoo.
4. Smokey Bear was replaced by the orphan of another fire.

￼￼￼￼￼￼3. Read this sentence from the passage.

Photographs of the badly burned cub, his playful recovery, and his life in Washington sent the popularity of the cartoon Smokey Bear skyrocketing.

The author uses the phrase playful recovery to suggest that Smokey

1. teased other zoo animals
2. was friendly with visitors
3. had fun while getting well
4. needed a long time to heal

￼￼￼￼￼￼4. In the sentence above, the author uses the word skyrocketing to mean that the popularity of the cartoon bear

1. was clear
2. rose rapidly
3. was exciting
4. disappeared quickly

5. Read this sentence from the passage.

Thousands of visitors dropped by to see the black bear who limped on one leg and

still bore scars from the fire that some careless camper or smoker had started.

What does the phrase dropped by mean in this sentence?

1. came
2. looked
3. planned
4. refused

6. The word careless means

1. full of care
2. without care
3. in a caring way
4. with some caring

￼￼￼￼￼￼7. Which detail supports the idea that the real Smokey Bear was very popular?

1. ￼Another orphan bear was rescued from a forest fire.
2. A firefighter took a photograph of him after the fire.
3. Smokey Bear had a large fan club while he lived at the zoo.
4. U.S. Forest Service rangers became famous for helping bears.

￼￼￼￼￼￼8. What did children receive for becoming Junior Forest Rangers?

1. a free ticket to visit Smokey in the National Zoo
2. a ranger kit along with pictures and cartoons of Smokey
3. an original poster and an action figure of the first Smokey
4. an autographed picture of the firefighter who rescued Smokey

￼￼￼￼￼

￼￼￼9. How were Smokey Senior and Smokey Junior similar?

1. ￼Both limped and had scars from a forest fire.
2. Both were buried at the Smokey Bear Historical Park.
3. Both could be seen at the National Zoo at the same time.
4. Both were rescued from a fire in the Lincoln National Forest.

￼￼￼￼￼￼

10. This passage is an example of nonfiction because it

1. uses many descriptive words
2. gives facts about a true story
3. includes the names of real places
4. has more than one main character

￼￼￼

**Grade – 5:**

**New Year’s Hats for the Statues**

Once a very kind old man and woman lived in a small house high in the hills of Japan. Although they were good people, they were very, very poor, for the old man made his living by weaving the reed hats that farmers wore to ward off the sun and rain, and even in a year’s time, he could not sell very many.

One cold winter day as the year was drawing to an end, the old woman said to the old man, “Good husband, it will soon be New Year’s Day, but we have nothing in the house to eat. How will we welcome the new year without even a pot of fresh rice?” A worried frown hovered over her face, and she sighed sadly as she looked into her empty cupboards.

But the old man patted her shoulders and said, “Now, now, don’t

you worry. I will make some reed hats and take them to the village to sell. Then with the money I earn I will buy some fish and rice for our New Year’s feast.”

On the day before New Year’s, the old man set out for the village

with five new reed hats that he had made. It was bitterly cold, and from

early morning, snow tumbled from the skies and blew in great drifts

about their small house. The old man shivered in the wind, but he

thought about the fresh, warm rice and the fish turning crisp and brown

over the charcoal, and he knew he must earn some money to buy them.

He pulled his wool scarf tighter about his throat and plodded on slowly

over the snow-covered roads.

When he got to the village, he trudged up and down its narrow streets calling, “Reed hats for sale! Reed hats for sale!” But everyone was too busy preparing for the new year to be bothered with reed hats. They scurried by him, going instead to the shops where they could buy sea bream and red beans and herring roe for their New Year’s feasts. No one even bothered to look at the old man or his hats.

As the old man wandered about the village, the snow fell faster, and before long the sky began to grow dark. The old man knew it was useless to linger, and he sighed with longing as he passed the fish shop and saw the rows of fresh fish.

“If only I could bring home one small piece of fish for my wife,” he thought glumly, but his pockets were even emptier than his stomach.

There was nothing to do but to go home again with his five unsold hats. The old man headed wearily back toward his little house in the hills, bending his head against the biting cold of the wind. As he walked along, he came upon six stone statues of Jizo, the guardian god of children. They stood by the roadside covered with snow that had piled in small drifts on top of their heads and shoulders.

“Mah, mah, you are covered with snow,” the old man said to the statues, and setting down his bundle, he stopped to brush the snow from their heads. As he was about to go on, a fine idea occurred to him.

“I am sorry these are only reed hats I could not sell,” he apologized, “but at least they will keep the snow off your heads.” And carefully he tied one on each of the Jizo statues.

“Now if I had one more there would be enough for each of them,” he murmured as he looked at the row of statues. But the old man did not hesitate for long. Quickly he took the hat from his own head and tied it on the head of the sixth statue.

“There,” he said, looking pleased. “Now all of you are covered.” Then, bowing in farewell, he told the statues that he must be going. “A happy New Year to each of you,” he called, and he hurried away content.

When he got home the old woman was waiting anxiously for him. “Did you sell your hats?” she asked. “Were you able to buy some rice and fish?”

The old man shook his head. “I couldn’t sell a single hat,” he explained, “but I did find a very good use for them.” And he told her how he had put them on the Jizo statues that stood in the snow.

“Ah, that was a very kind thing to do,” the old woman said. “I would have done exactly the same.” And she did not complain at all that the old man had not brought home anything to eat. Instead she made some hot tea and added a precious piece of charcoal to the brazier so the old man could warm himself.

That night they went to bed early, for there was no more charcoal and the house had grown cold. Outside the wind continued to blow the snow in a white curtain that wrapped itself about the small house. The old man and woman huddled beneath their thick quilts and tried to keep warm.

“We are fortunate to have a roof over our heads on such a night,” the old man said.

“Indeed we are,” the old woman agreed, and before long they were both fast asleep.

About daybreak, when the sky was still a misty gray, the old man awakened for he heard voices outside.

“Listen,” he whispered to the old woman.

“What is it? What is it?” the old woman asked.

Together they held their breath and listened. It sounded like a group of men pulling a very heavy load.

“Yoi-sah! Hoi-sah! Yoi-sah! Hoi-sah!” the voices called and seemed to come closer and closer.

“Who could it be so early in the morning?” the old man wondered. Soon, they heard the men singing:

Where is the home of the kind old man, The man who covered our heads? Where is the home of the kind old man, Who gave us his hats for our heads?

The old man and woman hurried to the window to look out, and there in the snow they saw the six stone Jizo statues lumbering toward their house. They still wore the reed hats the old man had given them and each one was pulling a heavy sack.

“Yoi-sah! Hoi-sah! Yoi-sah! Hoi-sah!” they called as they drew nearer and nearer.

“They seem to be coming here!” the old man gasped in amazement. But the old woman was too surprised even to speak.

As they watched, each of the Jizo statues came up to their house and left his sack at the doorstep.

The old man hurried to open the door, and as he did, the six big sacks came tumbling inside. In the sacks the old man and woman found rice and wheat, fish and beans, wine and bean paste cakes, and all sorts of delicious things that they might want to eat.

“Why, there is enough here for a feast every day all during the year!” the old man cried excitedly.

“And we shall have the finest New Year’s feast we have ever had in our lives,” the old woman exclaimed.

“Ojizo Sama, thank you!” the old man shouted.

“Ojizo Sama, how can we thank you enough?” the old woman called out.

But the six stone statues were already moving slowly down the road, and as the old man and woman watched, they disappeared into the whiteness of the falling snow, leaving only their footprints to show that they had been there at all.

Questions:

1. What is the passage mostly about?

1. An old man is rewarded for a good deed.
2. Jizo statues come to life and help the hungry.
3. A heavy snowfall makes life difficult for an old couple.
4. An old woman wants her husband to earn more money.

2. Why did the old man go to the village to sell the reed hats?

1. He wanted to surprise his wife with a gift.
2. The hats were worn during the New Year’s feast.
3. He wanted to earn money for food for the New Year’s feast.
4. The farmers needed the hats for shelter from the winter rain.

3. Read this sentence from the passage.

“If only I could bring home one small piece of fish for my wife,” he thought glumly.

If glum means sad, glumly means

1. with sadness
2. feeling less sad
3. to stop being sad
4. feeling sadness again

4. Read this sentence from the passage.

For the old man made his living by weaving the reed hats that farmers wore to ward off the sun and rain.

What does ward off mean in this statement?

1. hold up
2. substitute for
3. frighten away
4. protect against

6 Why didn’t the old woman complain when her husband brought home nothing to eat?

1. She was too cold to eat anything.
2. She was full from drinking the tea.
3. She knew the statues would bring food.
4. She knew that her husband tried his best.

7. How did the old man and woman feel as they huddled under the quilts in their cold house?

1. frightened by the wind
2. lucky to have their home
3. bitter about their poverty
4. excited about the holiday

8. Read this sentence from the passage.

Outside the wind continued to blow the snow in a white curtain that wrapped itself about the small house.

What does the comparison of snow to a curtain suggest?

1. the beauty of the snow
2. the coldness of the snow
3. the freshness of the snow
4. the movement of the snow

9. Who was singing a song about looking for the old man?

1. the Jizo statues
2. a group of children
3. farmers wearing reed hats
4. people celebrating New Year’s Day

10. Which feature of this passage best suggests it is a folktale?

1. It has a snowy setting.
2. The statues come to life.
3. The main characters are poor.
4. It takes place in a little village.

11. What would probably happen next if the passage continued?

1. The couple would move to the village.
2. The old man would make more reed hats.
3. The couple would enjoy a New Year’s feast.
4. The old man would look for more Jizo statues.

12. Based on the passage, which of these qualities is most important?

1. courage
2. honesty
3. kindness
4. strength

**Snowball Wind**

The wind was throwing snowballs.

It plucked them from the trees

and tossed them all around the woods

as boldly as you please.

I ducked beneath the spruces

which didn’t help a speck;

the wind kept throwing snowballs

and threw one down my neck.

Questions:

1. What is suggested in “Snowy Benches”?

1. The winter will soon be over.
2. Park benches are usually empty.
3. The snow hushes the city noises.
4. It is too cold for people to sit outside.

2. How does writing “Snowy Benches” as a question affect the reader?

1. It shows the reader that the poet is confused.
2. It warns the reader that the poem will be difficult.
3. It invites the reader to think about parks in winter.
4. ￼It makes the reader want to learn more about parks.

3. Which word from “Snowy Benches” makes parks seem as if they

were people?

1. benches
2. lonely
3. snow
4. winter

4. Where does “Snowball Wind” take place?

1. in a field
2. in a forest
3. on a ski slope
4. on a playground

5. What is the snowfall compared to in “Snowball Wind”?

1. a gust of wind
2. a snowball fight
3. a cold winter day
4. a game of hide and seek

6. Read these lines from “Snowball Wind.”

I ducked beneath the spruces which didn’t help a speck;

What does a speck mean in this phrase?

1. at all
2. at last
3. a small spot
4. a piece of dirt

7. How are the statues in “New Year’s Hats for the Statues” and the benches in “Snowy Benches” similar?

1. Both are located in a park.
2. Both are treated with respect.
3. Both seem to have human qualities.
4. Both are made of the same kind of stone.

8. How is the poet’s attitude in “Snowy Benches” similar to the old man’s attitude in “New Year’s Hats for the Statues”?

1. Both seem to enjoy the winter season.
2. ￼￼￼￼Both try to imagine how other people feel.
3. ￼￼Both feel sorry for things outside in the cold.
4. Both believe in being friendly to other people.

**Grade – 6:**

**Philippe and the Blue Parrot**

When Philippe was a young boy, his mother told him a story about a beautiful blue parrot who stole a golden earring from the sun.

“Watch for it, Philippe, my boy,” she said. “And when you find that golden earring, we will never go hungry again.”

And so Philippe kept his head down as he walked to school through the streets of Port- au-Prince, always looking for a glint of gold.

Years passed. Philippe did well in his studies. He was especially good at art. When Philippe was thirteen, he decided to make a birthday gift for his mother.

He took his art supplies to the park, and there, leaning the canvas against a bench, he painted Blue Parrot and the Sun. As he waited for the paint to dry, he studied the blue smudges between his fingers and a drop of yellow shining on his black wrist.

“Is that for sale?”

Philippe was startled by the question.

He had not heard the tourist walk up to him.

The woman squinted her eyes at the bright colors and asked again.

“Is that for sale?” Before Philippe could answer, she added, “I’ll pay twenty-five dollars for it.”

Twenty-five dollars! That was more than Philippe had earned in his whole life. It would take a long time to make that much money, even if he could get a job. What wonderful things he could buy his mother.

And so Philippe sold Blue Parrot and the Sun.

Years passed. Philippe’s paintings were sold in a Port-au-Prince gallery.

Many tourists liked his work and bought the canvases.

Every time Philippe painted a Blue Parrot and the Sun for his mother, the gallery owner had a buyer. The price went up and Philippe could not resist. But every time he sold a Blue Parrot, he put aside some money for his mother.

Many years passed. Now Philippe’s paintings could not be afforded by most tourists. His work hung in galleries and museums in Europe and the United States.

One day, he sat in his fine studio, ready to begin work on another Blue Parrot and the Sun. A journalist who had come to interview him stood nearby.

“Monsieur, your Blue Parrot and the Sun paintings are now very famous. Some critics say that they have a life and power that your other works lack. Why is that? Do you know?”

“Oh yes, I know,” Philippe replied slowly. “It is because I paint each Blue Parrot for my mother.”

“And how much will this new one sell for?” the journalist asked. “Thousands, I suppose?”

“Oh, this painting will not be for sale,” Philippe answered. He knew he had said that before, but this time, he really meant it.

And he added: “I found the golden earring many years ago. Now it’s time to give it back.”

There is a story the art collectors tell about a famous painting called Blue Parrot and the Sun. Oh, there are many, but the one to hunt for has a small golden earring hidden in the picture. Yes, that is the one worth a fortune. Some say it hangs on the wall of a simple house in the Haitian countryside. Others are not so sure. It could be anywhere.

**Questions:**

1. Why did Philippe paint the first Blue Parrot and the Sun?

1. A gallery requested the painting.
2. He painted it for a school project.
3. He wanted to earn money for food.
4. He planned to give it away as a gift.

2. What does the golden earring represent?

1. family
2. wealth
3. a mystery
4. a painting

3. What happens right after Philippe finishes his first Blue Parrot painting?

1. A journalist interviews him.
2. A tourist asks to buy the painting.
3. He gives the painting to his mother.
4. He begins working on another painting.

4. Which of these words best describes

Philippe?

1. determined
2. lazy
3. powerful
4. selfish

5. Where does the conclusion of this passage take place?

1. at a park
2. in a studio
3. in a gallery
4. at a museum

6. What would most likely happen if

Philippe sold his last Blue Parrot and the Sun painting?

1. He would begin painting another.
2. His mother would become upset with him
3. His work would become even more famous.
4. The gallery would stop selling his paintings.

7. Who most likely received Philippe’s Blue

Parrot and the Sun with the hidden golden earring?

1. a museum
2. his mother
3. a lucky tourist
4. an art collector

8. Read these sentences from the passage.

“I found the golden earring many years ago.

Now it’s time to give it back.”

Philippe most likely plans to give the

golden earring back by

1. giving his mother a special gift
2. opening a new art studio in his hometown
3. making his paintings affordable to everyone
4. sharing the blue parrot story with the journalist

9. Read this sentence from the passage.

And so Philippe kept his head down as he walked to school through the streets of Port-au-Prince, always looking for a glint of gold.

What does the word glint mean in this sentence?

1. blob
2. picture
3. sparkle
4. treasure

**It Bounces, It Floats**

Do they bounce? You may think that’s a silly question to ask about cranberries. Farmers think it’s not silly. Good cranberries bounce; bad ones don’t.

One of the early settlers of our country discovered this himself. According to legend, Peg Leg John, a New Jersey farmer, was packing cranberries in his barn. One box fell over. John noticed that all the spoiled and dried-out cranberries just remained where they fell. The fresh, ripe ones bounced.

Old Peg Leg John’s method of sorting berries is still used by packers today. Each cranberry harvested must bounce over several wooden barriers. The high jumpers, able to leap over barriers in a single bound, make it to the finish line. These are the ones we want on our table for Thanksgiving.

Cranberry plants trail along the ground like a low-growing evergreen. They are a productive crop in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Oregon, Washington, and New Jersey. In the New Jersey Pine Barrens, they often grow wild. There the bright red berries are nicknamed the “rubies of the pines.”

These amazing berries also float. Today, many growers harvest their crops by flooding their fields or cranberry bogs. A machine much like a paddle boat beats the plants, loosening the fruit. The ripe cranberries float to the surface and are collected

in a process called rafting. During rafting, the cranberry-gathering crew pushes the floating berries with long wooden tools to the end of the bog. The berries are gathered up and placed in boxes.

The flower of the cranberry plant looks like the beak of a crane. This is why the Pilgrims referred to it as a crane berry. Later, the common name became cranberry.

We can’t be sure of the menu for the first Thanksgiving Day, but it’s almost certain that cranberries were served. The fruit was an important food to the American Indians. They called it sassamanesh or ibimi. It was used in pemmican, a dried trail food. The Indians also used the tart scarlet berries in making red dye and medicines.

The early settlers stored barrels of the berries on ships for long ocean voyages. The high vitamin C content helped prevent scurvy1 among the sailors.

Today, cranberries are used in juice as well as sauce. Cranberry juice is often mixed with other, sweeter fruit juices for a healthful, good- tasting drink.

Cranberries—they’re truly super berries!

Questions:

1. This passage is mostly about how cranberries

1. are used in recipes
2. are used by sailors
3. are nutritious and tasty
4. are grown and harvested

2. According to the passage, why did the early settlers pack cranberries for their voyages?

1. to prevent scurvy
2. to eat as trail food
3. to squeeze into juice
4. to make clothing dye

3. The author most likely wrote this passage in order to

1. describe how cranberries are packed in boxes
2. explain the health benefits of eating cranberries
3. encourage more people to drink cranberry juice
4. provide information about the history of cranberries

4. Cranberries are nicknamed “rubies of the pines” because they

1. are bright red in color
2. grow in evergreen trees
3. are worth a lot of money
4. grow wild in some places

5. According to the passage, what is the first step in harvesting cranberries?

1. placing the berries in boxes
2. flooding the cranberry bogs
3. beating the plants to loosen the fruit
4. pushing the berries with a wooden tool

6. Which of these sentences from the passage expresses an opinion?

1. Old Peg Leg John’s method of sorting berries is still used by packers today.
2. The berries are gathered up and placed in boxes.
3. The flower of the cranberry plant looks like the beak of a crane.
4. The early settlers stored barrels of the berries on ships for long ocean voyages.

7. In this passage, the cranberry is compared to a

1. bog
2. dye
3. jewel
4. vitamin

8. The author most likely included the last

sentence in the passage in order to

1. ￼￼create a picture of a cranberry
2. clarify how cranberries are used
3. show enthusiasm for cranberries
4. describe the taste of cranberry juice

9. This passage is an example of nonfiction because it

1. tells a story
2. includes illustrations
3. states facts about a topic
4. has been retold many times

**Grade – 7:**

**Raggedy Pants and the Dinosaur Wall**

It’s Libby Burns’s fault that I’m dangling upside down on this Dinosaur Climbing Wall at our Jellyfish Festival. I’m dizzier than a seagull on a weathervane during a nor’easter.1 Every single drop of blood has

drained to my head and is sloshing around in my brain. Feels like my tummy’s trying to push . . . up? down? How did I get here?

When I get my eyes halfway steadied, I notice that Miz Pennyfeather, our librarian, is down below

shaking her head at me. So are my folks, my older sister Raisin, my little sister Hattie, and some other kids. Hattie has her mouth open so wide that I can see her back teeth. That’s because she’s

shouting, “Maizell, you look like a bat! Libby’s getting ahead of you! Come on, straighten up

and climb right!”

Easy for her to say, safe and upright on the ground. With my beaded braids banging me

in the eyeballs, I struggle around in my climbing harness, find another handhold, and finally get turned

right-side up. Of course, then all the blood shoots down to my feet. My brain deflates so fast I have to lean my head against the wall. Everything’s going jibbity jibbity jibbity.

I think I’m going to throw up, too, right on Miz Pennyfeather’s hat. Then she’d never let me be a library helper for sure!

With one hand I hitch up my shorts and cautiously check to make sure they haven’t ripped out the back. I bought them at the Henny Penny Store, where you can get great bargains. The stuff usually won’t tear up or break apart, at least not right away. Hattie says I’m cheap, but Momma calls me frugal. I like that word.

Libby Burns is above me on the wall in her yellow shorts, too. When she saw me in my pretty yellow shorts last week, she went out and bought the exact same kind from somewhere in the mall. But hers cost $30, she made sure to tell me. Her family’s got money, which is okay, but she brags about it so much that she makes me and everybody else sick, sick, sick! She also loves to try to talk psychological in that way that intimidates and rules over folks. Torn shorts and “Miss It” Libby Burns are what got me into this predicament2 in the first place.

It all started last month, when I went to her birthday party. Everyone was there. Her older brother jumped out at me in his shiny green skin-diving suit, goggles, and flippers, looking like the creature from the swamp. He scared me so bad I split the behind out of my jeans getting away.

Libby’s called me Raggedy Pants ever since. She makes me madder than a cat with its tail caught in the gate. And finally, last week, I decided I’d had enough. We were on the blacktop after lunch, and she started in on me. And all these kids were laughing. I wanted to cry or run away. But I made myself stand glued to the floor. Finally I got the nerve to say, “Why don’t you button your lip.”

That got Libby, because her eyes sort of bugged out.

“I got a right to speak my mind,” she said, like I was a mosquito she could squash with her words. And to tell you the truth, that’s how I felt.

And then she started singing, “Raggedy Pants, Raggedy Pants, so scaredy cat you split your pants.” And everyone started laughing again. So what was my choice? I could run away or show Libby Burns that I wasn’t some bug she could stomp on. Actually, running seemed like a good idea. But I stayed right there, my sneakers glued to the cafeteria floor. I thought of my big sister Raisin, who never runs away from anything.

“If I’m such a scaredy cat, how come I climbed the Big Rock just last week?” I asked. I made myself stare right at her bugged-out eyes. Big Rock is a climbing wall at the community center. I’d climbed up twice, in fact. I don’t think Libby made it even once.

Libby stared at me, and that’s when I unglued my sneakers and stomped away, my braids swinging just perfectly. I thought that was the end of it. And it was.

Until this morning, when my whole family came to the tenth annual South Carolina Jellyfish Festival, right here in Gumbo Grove, South Carolina, where we all live at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. Everyone in town showed up, including Libby Burns. Raisin and I were standing at the Ferris wheel when Miss It strutted up and said, “Hey, scaredy cat, meet me at the Dinosaur Wall at 2:00. We’ll see who’s scared!”

I think the Dinosaur Wall must be the biggest climbing wall in the world. It was brought in from Durham, North Carolina, especially for our Jellyfish Festival.

“Don’t do it, Maizell,” Raisin said. “You have nothing to prove to Libby Burns.”

But for once I knew Raisin was wrong. I’d have to try to climb the wall, no matter how scared I was. Otherwise, Libby would tell everybody I really was a Raggedy Pants and a scaredy cat. And she’d be right.

So that’s how I got here, stuck up against this gigantic Dinosaur Wall with everybody looking up at me and laughing. This wall looks taller than the hotels on our oceanfront. I make myself look down quick. Raisin waves at me. She’s not afraid of anything. I wish I could be like her, instead of “ole” scaredy cat Maizell me, right now.

Above me, Libby’s behind now looks like one of those big sales balloons you see flying over a car lot. And that makes me laugh. When I laugh, then I don’t feel so scared. Gathering up my courage, I follow Libby’s lead, and the next thing I know, I’m going up that wall again, too.

As folks start screaming, “Go Maizell! Go Maizell! ” I pull even with Libby at the top of the Dinosaur Wall. I refuse to look down anymore because I know by now that the ground is a million miles below.

Instead I look over at Libby. She’s light-skinned but right now her face is red. She’s puffing and sweating. Strands of her long black hair are stuck to her cheeks. When she glances at me, I get ready to hear her call me names. I try to think of something smart to say back. But what she says is, “I think I’m gonna throw up.”

“Don’t look down,” I say back, to my surprise. “Take deep breaths. Let the rope slide you down.”

But she says she’s too scared, that she can’t. The man on the ground with her guide rope is just standing there waiting. Now my man’s waiting, too. So instead of my sliding down the wall and leaving her up there like I should, I stay with her. I’m saying, “Take it easy, watch your feet, you’ll make it okay,” and so on. Am I crazy encouraging her? I guess I’m feeling that maybe she’ll think I’m a heroine, helping her like this. I’m thinking maybe she’ll stop calling me names now. Maybe it’s not her fault that she’s so mean.

Just when we’re both maybe fifteen feet from the bottom, she looks over at me again. “Raggedy Pants!” she screams and starts sliding down past me fast.

Was she faking all along? After me trying to be nice! I should have known not to feel sorry for her. So you know what? I yell right back, “Maybe so, but now YOUR pants are ripped up the back!”

She freezes with her mouth in an “o” shape. While she’s reaching with one hand to feel her shorts, I slide right on down to the ground and win. Hattie and Raisin rush up and hug me.

Libby slides down, too. She gets out of that harness with her back to everybody and FLIES toward the nearest restroom building.

I want to laugh at her, she looks so crazy. But I realize I don’t want to act mean the way Libby always does. I run after her.

“I was just kidding!” I holler.

Libby skids to a stop and glares at me.

But then she sits down on a nearby rock and gives me a half smile.

“Well,” she says, “I guess I deserved it.”

All of a sudden Libby Burns doesn’t look so mean. We both know our race is over. Nobody won.

But nobody lost, either.

**Questions:**

1. Why is Maizell angry at Libby?

1. Libby calls her a name.
2. Libby’s family is wealthy.
3. Libby’s brother scared her.
4. ￼￼￼￼￼￼Libby climbs the rock wall faster.

2. In the passage, Maizell’s character is revealed mostly

1. by her thoughts
2. by what others say about her
3. by her physical characteristics
4. by her conversations with her friends

3. Why does Maizell climb the Dinosaur Wall?

1. to win a contest
2. to enjoy the festival
3. to encourage her friend
4. to prove she has courage

4. Read this sentence from the passage.

“I got a right to speak my mind,” she said, like I was a mosquito she could squash with her words.

The author most likely uses the underlined

phrase in order to

1. compare Libby to an insect
2. show how small Maizell feels
3. compare how angry the girls are
4. show that Libby finds Maizell annoying

5. Read this sentence from the passage. Hattie says I’m cheap, but Momma calls me frugal.

What does the word frugal mean?

1. Compassionate
2. lively
3. powerful
4. thrifty

6. The author most likely intended this passage to show

1. the effects of teasing
2. the challenge of rock climbing
3. the difficulty of entering a competition
4. the reason people are fearful of heights

7. If timidus means afraid, what does intimidate mean?

1. to distress
2. to confuse
3. to cause illness
4. to cause closeness

8. Read these sentences from the passage.

Hattie has her mouth open so wide that I can see her back teeth. That’s because she’s shouting, “Maizell, you look like a bat! Libby’s getting ahead of you! Come on, straighten up and climb right!”

Easy for her to say, safe and upright on the ground.

What does Hattie mean by the underlined phrase?

1. Maizell is hanging upside down.
2. Maizell is dressed in black for the festival.
3. Maizell is running so fast it looks like she is flying.
4. Maizell’s arms are flapping up and down as if she is flying.

￼￼￼￼￼￼9 The author’s style is characterized by comparisons like these found in “Raggedy Pants and the Dinosaur Wall”:

dizzier than a seagull on a weathervane during a nor’easter like the creature from the swamp taller than the hotels on our oceanfront

Which of these sentences best explains the effect of these comparisons on the passage?

1. They create vivid images.
2. They create natural images.
3. They establish a frightening mood.
4. They reveal astonishing exaggerations.

￼￼￼￼￼￼10 Why does Maizell decide to help Libby?

1. Maizell feels sorry for her.
2. Libby rips her new yellow shorts.
3. Libby admits she has been unkind.
4. Maizell wants to get back at Libby.

**The Pigeon and the Peacock**

At the end of our driveway,

where streams of soapy water

have pooled against the curb,

struts a pigeon who’s in love with himself.

He circles a puddle, 5 cocking his head

first one way,

then another,

admiring his iridescent1 feathers

and trying to determine his most flattering profile. 10

At the top of our driveway,

where my brother waxes his car and

buffs its windows to mirrored perfection, struts a peacock who’s in love with himself. . . .

My brother, 15

He circles the car,

cocking his head

first one way,

then another,

practicing his lover-boy smile 20

and striking a muscle pose in the windshield.

A car splashes by,

dousing the pompous pigeon,

and I tiptoe around the garage

with a well-aimed hose. 25

Questions:

1. Which pair of words best describes the brother in the poem?

1. busy, sensible
2. friendly, strong
3. humorous, lively
4. conceited, distracted

2. How is the brother in the poem similar to the pigeon?

1. He acts like the pigeon.
2. He sounds like the pigeon.
3. They both get wet in the poem.
4. They both use a puddle for a mirror.

3. How does the pigeon in the poem get wet?

1. it jumps off the curb
2. it falls into the puddle
3. a passing car sprays it with water
4. the speaker splashes it with the hose

4. The last two stanzas of the poem compare the brother to a

1. sly fox
2. ￼worker bee
3. vain peacock
4. playful puppy

5. Read these lines from the poem.

A car splashes by,

dousing the pompous pigeon,

and I tiptoe around the garage

with a well-aimed hose.

What will the speaker most likely do next?

1. wash the car
2. help the pigeon
3. frighten the pigeon
4. surprise the brother

6. Both “Raggedy Pants and the Dinosaur Wall” and “The Pigeon and the Peacock” show the human need for

1. acceptance
2. beauty
3. happiness
4. pleasure

7. What is the main idea shared by “Raggedy Pants and the Dinosaur Wall” and “The Pigeon and the Peacock”?

1. Enemies can become friends through understanding.
2. People should not brag about their accomplishments.
3. Brothers and sisters can remain friends even if they act differently.
4. People who think too much of themselves may eventually be humbled.

**Grade – 8:**

**Juan Bobo’s Pig**

Have you heard the story of Juan Bobo and his pig?

Once upon a time in a little village in Puerto Rico, there was a little boy named Juan Bobo. One day Juan Bobo’s mother said to him, “Juanito mijo,1 go and clean up the pig and make her look as beautiful as you can, so that when you take her to market this morning to sell her she will fetch a good price.”

Well, Juan Bobo always tried to do exactly as his mother told him. So he went and washed the pig with buckets of soapy water, and scrubbed her face with a warm washcloth—but she still didn’t look very beautiful.

So Juan Bobo went to his mother’s closet and got out her red taffeta2 skirt with the elastic waistband, and he slipped that around the pig’s waist.

Then he went to the house of his great-aunt Margarita, who weighed almost three hundred pounds. He borrowed a blouse and a bright red wig, and he fit those onto the pig.

He outlined the pig’s eyes as best he could with black eyeliner and a touch of blue eye shadow; he put bright red lipstick on the pig’s lips; and he got two pairs of his mother’s high-heeled pumps and strapped those onto her trotters.

Now the pig looked really beautiful to Juan Bobo! So he put a rope around her neck and started to take her to market.

But halfway along the road to town they came upon a big muddy puddle. This big muddy puddle looked really beautiful to the pig. She threw herself down right in the middle of the big muddy puddle, and she rolled around a couple times, because it felt so good to her.

There was nothing Juan Bobo could do about it—because she was much bigger than he was, and sometimes she just forgot that Juan Bobo was supposed to be in charge. She kicked off her high-heeled pumps—all except one that got stuck sideways. She got the red taffeta skirt all covered with mud, she ripped one sleeve out of the blouse, tore off her wig, and completely ruined her mascara.

By the time Juan Bobo got the pig out of the puddle and all the way to town, she didn’t look so beautiful anymore. In fact, when the townspeople saw Juan Bobo and his pig, they laughed and laughed and laughed the two of them all the way back home.

So that today, in Puerto Rico, whenever somebody gets so dressed up that their friends almost— but not quite—don’t recognize them, people say that they are “all dressed up like Juan Bobo’s pig.”

Questions:

1. Juan dresses up the pig in order to

1. help sell it
2. keep it clean
3. make people laugh
4. please his great-aunt

2. ￼Read this statement from the passage.

He outlined the pig’s eyes as best he could with black eyeliner and a touch of blue eye shadow;

Which meaning of touch is used in this statement?

1. a tiny dab
2. a soft nudge
3. an equal amount
4. an individual style

3. The pig probably jumps into the puddle in order to

1. cool off in the mud
2. make Juan Bobo angry
3. make the townspeople laugh
4. remove the makeup from her face

4. Why is Juan unable to get the pig out of the mud puddle?

1. The pig is stuck there, sideways.
2. He has forgotten to bring a rope.
3. The pig is much bigger than he is.
4. He must stay clean for the market.

5. Which of these best states a possible lesson in this passage?

1. Respect your elders.
2. Think before you act.
3. Money is the root of evil.
4. Better safe than sorry.

6. This passage is an example of

1. a folk tale
2. a fairy tale
3. science fiction
4. realistic fiction

7. What is Juan’s mother most likely to do when he returns home with the pig?

1. scold Juan for his foolish actions
2. find the people who laughed at Juan
3. punish the pig for causing problems for Juan
4. send Juan to ask his great-aunt for another blouse

8. Which of these ideas about animals is best supported by the events in this passage?

1. Clean animals make wonderful pets.
2. Trained animals are worth more money.
3. Instincts determine an animal’s behavior.
4. Animals reward their owners for kind treatment.

**Why Is It So Hard to Get Ketchup Out of the Bottle?**

The Super Double Cheeseburger Deluxe arrives at your table. You stare at the dripping burger and the tantalizingly crisp, golden French fries. The only thing that’s missing is the ketchup, so you grab the bottle and prepare to slather1 your entire plate.

You unscrew the cap, but . . . what’s this? Nothing is coming out! Why is ketchup so hard to pour out of the bottle?

Ketchup is a liquid, right? Not really. A solid? Nope. Actually, ketchup is a type of solution that sometimes acts as a liquid and other times acts as a solid. Ketchup and other solutions that have properties of both a solid and a liquid are called thixotropic solutions. Other thixotropic solutions that you may have in the house include yogurt and margarine. When yogurt sits undisturbed, it is a jellylike solid. When you stir it, it becomes more like a liquid. Margarine that has been refrigerated can become quite hard, but once it warms up, it becomes softer and more liquid—and much easier to spread on toast!

So why are thixotropic solutions so weird? Why can’t they just make up their minds and be one or the other: solid or liquid? The answer is that molecules of a thixotropic substance tend to form in long chains. When these substances are stirred or shaken, the chains of molecules break apart into smaller segments, allowing the yogurt or ketchup to act more like a liquid. Imagine that a bottle of ketchup is like

a bottle full of string. You can see that pouring string out of a bottle is not going to be easy! But if you shake the bottle, the “strings” break apart into small pieces, which come out of the neck more easily.

Thixotropic solutions are also found in more exotic locations than the kitchen. Quicksand is a thixotropic mixture of sand and water. It looks like any other patch

of sand, but once someone steps in it, the loosely packed molecules give way, causing the unlucky adventurer to sink into the quicksand.

Thixotropic mixtures of soil and water can be useful, however. Oil rigs use a thixotropic mix of clay and water to make “drilling mud.” This mixture is pumped down a drilling hole to keep the drill bit cool and lubricated. Drilling mud remains a liquid when it is being stirred by

the drill, but acts as a solid around the sides of the drilling hole, which helps to keep the hole from collapsing.

Believe it or not, we have thixotropic fluid in our own bodies. This fluid is found in our elbows and knees, where two bones move against one another. It is called synovial fluid and it protects our bones and joints from damage. During normal movement, synovial fluid helps lubricate the joint. But if the joint is hit or suddenly twisted, the fluid immediately becomes thicker. In this way, synovial fluid helps protect our joints from injury.

Now you know all about the mysterious, helpful, and sometimes frustrating

behavior of thixotropic solutions, which, because of their unique2 molecular structure, have some properties of both solids and liquids. Sometimes this can

be helpful, as in the case of drilling mud and synovial fluid. Thixotropy can also be dangerous and deceiving, as in quicksand. Sometimes thixotropy is just plain curious—or irritating. It depends on how badly you want that ketchup out of the bottle.

Questions:

1. The author most likely wrote this passage to

1. show a connection between science and real life
2. encourage readers to conduct scientific experiments
3. provide a detailed explanation of molecular structure
4. remind readers of how important it is to eat the right foods

2. This passage is an example of nonfiction because it

1. includes personal opinions
2. asks and answers questions
3. mentions objects from everyday life
4. presents factual information on a topic

3. Read this sentence from the passage. Thixotropic solutions are also found in more exotic locations than the kitchen.

What does exotic mean in this sentence?

1. comfortable
2. glamorous
3. private
4. strange

4. Which of these sentences from the passage is an opinion?

1. A Ketchup and other solutions that have properties of both a solid and a liquid are called thixotropic solutions.
2. Margarine that has been refrigerated can become quite hard, but once it warms up, it becomes softer and more liquid—and much easier to spread on toast!
3. During normal movement, synovial fluid helps lubricate the joint.
4. Sometimes thixotropy is just plain curious—or irritating.

5. When does a thixotropic solution act more like a liquid?

1. when it is stirred
2. when it is cooled
3. when it is put away
4. when it is first opened

6. When a joint is twisted, synovial fluid protects the joint by

1. warming it
2. lubricating it
3. forming into smaller pieces
4. becoming more like a solid

7. The author most likely uses questions in this passage to

1. help the reader understand the scientific terms
2. surprise the reader with an unusual writing style
3. interest the reader in the topic of thixotropic solutions
4. test the reader who is unfamiliar with thixotropic solutions

8. Which of these phrases best states how the information in paragraph 5 is organized?

1. from cause to effect
2. from facts to opinions
3. by a main idea and supporting details
4. by the order in which events occurred

**Grade – 10:**

**The Appalachians**

Once, aeons ago, the Appalachians were of a scale and majesty to rival the Himalayas—piercing, snow-peaked, pushing breathtakingly through the clouds to heights of four miles or more. New Hampshire’s Mount Washington is still an imposing presence, but the stony mass that rises from the New England woods today represents, at most, the stubby bottom one-third of what was ten million years ago.

That the Appalachian Mountains present so much more modest an aspect today is because they have had so much time in which to wear away. The Appalachians are immensely old—older than the oceans and continents (at least in their present configurations), far, far older than most other mountain chains, older indeed than almost all other landscape features on earth. When simple plants colonized the land and the first creatures crawled gasping from the sea, the Appalachians were there to greet them.

Something over a billion years ago, the continents of earth were a single mass called Pangaea surrounded by the lonely Panthalassan Sea. Then some unexplained turmoil within the earth’s mantle caused the land to break apart and drift off as vast asymmetrical chunks. From time to time over the ages since—three times at least—the continents have held a kind of grand reunion, floating back to some central spot and bumping together with slow but crushing force. It was during the third of these collisions, starting about 470 million years ago, that the Appalachians were first pushed up (like a rucked1 carpet, as the analogy nearly always has it). Four hundred seventy million years is a span pretty well beyond grasping, but if you can imagine flying backwards through time at the rate of one year per second, it would take you about sixteen years to cover such a period. It’s a long time.

The continents didn’t just move in and out from each other in some kind of grand slow-motion square dance but spun in lazy circles, changed their orientation, went on cruises to the tropics and poles, made friends with smaller land masses, and brought them home. Florida once belonged to Africa. A corner of Staten Island is, geologically, part of Europe. The seaboard from New England up to Canada appears to have originated in Morocco. Parts of Greenland, Ireland, Scotland, and Scandinavia have the same rocks as the eastern United States— are, in effect, ruptured outposts of the Appalachians. There are even suggestions that mountains as far south as the Shackleton Range in Antarctica may be fragments of the Appalachian family.

Questions:

1. What is the main idea of the passage?

1. All continents were once part of a single land mass.
2. The Appalachians have changed a great deal over time.
3. At one time, the Appalachians were the highest mountains on earth.
4. Collisions between drifting continents helped form the earth’s mountain ranges.

2. Read this sentence from the passage.

New Hampshire’s Mount Washington is still an imposing presence, but the stony mass that rises from the New England woods today represents, at most, the stubby bottom one-third of what was ten million years ago.

In this context, the word imposing means

1. decaying
2. growing
3. impressive
4. inconvenient

3. According to the passage, about how old are the Appalachians?

1. over a billion years old
2. about 10 million years old
3. several thousand years old
4. about 470 million years old

4. According to the passage, the Appalachians were formed by

1. collision among the continents
2. a volcanic eruption in New England
3. the breakup of the landmass Pangaea
4. some unexplained turmoil within the earth’s mantle

5. What characteristic of the Appalachians does the author emphasize the most?

1. their age
2. their location
3. their uniqueness
4. their ruggedness

6. Which sentence best expresses the main idea of the fourth paragraph?

1. The continents are moving faster than most people think.
2. Old parts of the Appalachians can be found in many remote places.
3. The landmasses of the earth are made up of fragments of the United States.
4. Many of the earth’s geographical features have changed locations over time.

**Trumpeter Swan**

Description

The Trumpeter Swan is the largest waterfowl species native to North America. Most Trumpeters weigh 21–30 pounds, although large males may exceed 35 pounds. The male is called a cob; the female is called a pen. With a wingspan over 7 feet, these snow-white birds are truly spectacular. Standing on the ground, an adult Trumpeter stands about 4 feet high.

Trumpeters have broad, flat bills with fine tooth- like serrations1 along the edges that strain water when the birds eat aquatic vegetation. Their long necks allow them to uproot plants in 4 feet of water. Trumpeters are often confused with the far more common Tundra Swan (formerly Whistling Swan, Cygnus columbianus), the only other native swan that occurs regularly in North America. Tundra Swans can beseen in the upper Midwest during spring and fall migration. Observers have described theTrumpeter’s call as resonant, deep and loud, sonorous, and trumpet-like. Hence the bird’s name: Trumpeter Swan.

A swan in its first year is called a juvenile or cygnet. Juvenile Trumpeter and Tundra Swans are grayish. Tundra cygnets are more silver gray than the darker Trumpeter cygnets, which are sooty gray in the head and neck areas. Swan cygnets do not become all white until about a year old. In their first summer, Trumpeter and Tundra Swan cygnets have pink bills with black tips. The bills turn all black during the first winter.

Status and Distribution

Trumpeter Swans were once fairly common throughout most of the northern United States and Canada. Market hunting and the millinery4 trade rapidly depleted nesting populations during the 19th century. By 1900, it was widely believed that the species had become extinct. Fortunately, a small non-migratory population survived in the remote mountain valleys of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming.

Once considered for federal “endangered” status, the Trumpeter is not officially listed as threatened or endangered. In the Midwest, however, it is actually more rare than the threatened Bald Eagle. It has no official state status in Midwestern states, except in Wisconsin, where it is listed as an endangered species, and in Michigan, where it is a threatened species.

Breeding Biology

Trumpeter Swans may form pair bonds as early as their second winter and some may nest for the first time at age three years. Most Trumpeters, however, don’t nest until they are four to six years old. Trumpeter Swans mate for life and may live for 20 to 30 years. If one member of a pair dies, the survivor finds another mate.

Swans usually form pair bonds where they spend the winter. Pairs may select a nesting area near where the pen hatched. The pen chooses the specific nesting area and the cob defends it, sometimes joined by the pen. If a pair spends at least two summers at the same nesting location, it will form an almost unbreakable attachment to the site.

Nest building begins in mid-April and may take up to two weeks. Beginning in late April to early May, the pen lays one off-white egg about 421 inches long and 3 inches wide every other day until a clutch of five to nine eggs is complete. Once all eggs have been laid, the pen incubates the eggs and the cob protects the nest against all intruders. When the cygnets hatch in June, they weigh about 7 ounces. After a day or two, they take to the water to feed on insects and other aquatic invertebrates. For the first several weeks, a cygnet may concentrate on this protein-rich food source to support its rapid growth. At early stages cygnets may gain 20% of their body weight every day.

By the time the cygnets are four to six weeks old they are feeding on aquatic vegetation, using their bills to uproot plants as their parents do.

The cygnets grow rapidly. At six weeks, the belly, breast, and cheek are fully feathered. By seven weeks, cygnets have most neck and crown feathers. Cygnets have little down left at eight weeks and are fully feathered by nine to ten weeks though they are unable to fly until about 15 weeks of age. At 15 weeks the cygnets weigh about 20 pounds. Their growth rate exceeds a pound a week!

The first flights in late September are typically short. Daily practice prepares the cygnets to migrate with their parents just before freeze-up to wintering areas. Cygnets will remain with their parents during winter and migrate north with them. Then the parents drive them away. By this time the cygnets are about one year old. They remain together in sibling groups until about two years of age when they, too, begin to seek mates and a new life in a remote marsh.

Midwest Restoration Programs

Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan are attempting to reestablish Trumpeter Swans by rearing cygnets in captivity. After two years, unrelated birds are paired and released at selected wetlands. Birds are retained in captivity for two years because it is believed that the first two years of a cygnet’s life are the most difficult to survive. Released birds typically “imprint” on the release area; that is, they will most likely return to that area to nest at age four years.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) began their Trumpeter Swan recovery program in 1987 in cooperation with the Milwaukee County Zoo, the Wisconsin Metro Audubon Society, and the MDNR (Minnesota Department

of Natural Resources). The goal of the WDNR recovery program: to achieve a population of at least 20 breeding and migratory pairs by the year 2000.

Questions:

1. The Trumpeter Swan gets its name from its

1. loud call
2. broad bill
3. great height
4. brilliant color

2. Read this sentence from the passage.

Market hunting and the millinery trade rapidly depleted nesting populations during the 19th century.

What does depleted mean in this sentence?

1. Discovered
2. Exterminated
3. Reduced
4. Relocated

3. Which of these best explains how the graphics are an aid to the text?

1. They prove that the Trumpeter is a superior swan.
2. They provide basic information about the Trumpeter.
3. They suggest the ways in which Trumpeters are like humans.
4. They show why the Trumpeter should be classified as “endangered.”

4. How are some Mid-western states trying to reestablish the Trumpeter Swan population?

1. by protesting the hunting of Trumpeters for the millinery trade
2. by demanding that Trumpeters remain on all “endangered” lists
3. by prohibiting regional zoos from releasing Trumpeters to the wild
4. by raising Trumpeters in captivity during the first two years of their lives

5. The author presents the information mainly through the effective use of

1. colorful language
2. simple descriptions
3. emotional arguments
4. informational graphics

6. How is the Trumpeter Swan’s bill specially adapted for feeding in water?

1. The toothlike edges help to filter food.
2. The flat shape helps to scoop up small fish.
3. The sharp point helps to dig up aquatic plants.
4. The small teeth inside help to grind vegetation.

7. How does the organization of the article help the reader?

1. It states the problem and several possible solutions.
2. It follows the chronology of a Trumpeter Swan’s life.
3. It divides the information into smaller sections by topic.
4. It presents information from most important to least important.

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