March 24, 2020

Dear Students and Parents,

Just to let you know, we miss you guys!! We hope that you are enjoying this break and that you’re ready to do a little bit of reading and writing.

In your packet, we’ve included:
  * SBAC practice – Week 2, 3, and 4
  * A narrative essay by James Herriot titled *Cat on the Go*, with questions at the end
  * A humorous essay titled *The Night the Bed Fell*, with questions at the end

Directions:

1. Each day, read for 30 minutes. Keep a journal of what you are reading. You may also listen to audiobooks, read magazines, fiction or nonfiction books. The library has an app called Libby where you may check out books, provided you have a library card. Another option might be Audible, although there is a charge for this after the first month.

2. Read the short stories included in this packet. They should be fun! If you need help with the questions at the end, check with an older brother or sister, or other family members.

3. Check into Readworks. That would be another way to spend 30 minutes reading.


Above all else, take good care of yourself and your family. You have a rare opportunity to be together as a family - hopefully that isn’t too crazy!

Hope to see you all very soon.

Best wishes,

Mr. Jones and Ms. Elquest
Day 1

On November 24, 1971, the day before Thanksgiving, a man bought a ticket using the name Dan Cooper. The man boarded a plane in Portland that was headed to Seattle. He was professionally dressed in a suit and carried a briefcase. Once the plane took off, he handed a note to a flight attendant that said he was carrying a bomb. He let the flight attendant know that he wanted $200,000, four parachutes and a way to refuel the plane. The flight attendant asked to see the bomb and he opened his briefcase to show her a device that appeared to be an explosive. Despite his seemingly nefarious intentions, he was very friendly to the flight attendant and attempted to tip her and offered to buy food for her and the rest of the crew.

1. What does nefarious mean?
   a. positive
   b. average
   c. evil

2. What does intentions mean?
   a. plans
   b. memories
   c. attitude

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about the hijacker's decision to wear a suit?
   a. He wanted to avoid suspicion.
   b. He had a job interview.
   c. That was the standard dress for flying in 1971.

Day 2

The plane landed at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport. Once the hijacker was able to confirm that his demands for $200,000 and four parachutes had been met, he allowed the 36 passengers to exit the plane. He discussed his stipulations with the pilots and they decided they would fly towards Mexico. He demanded that the plane fly very slowly and low to the ground. He also requested that the staircase stay down, but when the pilot protested citing safety concerns, the hijacker said that he would just lower the staircase once in flight. A few hours later, the plane took off with the hijacker and a few crew members on board.

1. What does stipulations mean?
   a. demands
   b. plans
   c. fears

2. What does citing mean?
   a. promising
   b. referencing
   c. refusing

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. It can be inferred that the hijacker didn’t really want to hurt anyone. What supports that inference?
   a. He wanted the plane flown slowly.
   b. He let the passengers off the plane.
   c. He asked for four parachutes.
Day 3

As soon as the plane took off, authorities expediently worked to make sure that other planes were following from a safe distance. On the plane, Cooper told the flight attendant to go the cabin with the rest of the crew and to shut the door. As she was leaving, she saw him tie something around his waist. After they had been flying for a bit, a warning sounded that indicated that the staircase had been lowered and shortly after there was evidence that the plane's door had been opened. When the plane landed, authorities quickly surrounded and swarmed the plane. Their search of the plane for the hijacker turned up empty.

1. What does expediently mean?
   a. patiently
   b. importantly
   c. quickly

2. What does indicated mean?
   a. showed
   b. hinted
   c. hid

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be drawn from today's passage?
   a. The hijacker hid on the plane.
   b. The hijacker did not have a plan.
   c. The hijacker jumped out of the plane.

Day 4

Authorities immediately began gathering clues to try to track down the escaped hijacker. Aboard the plane, authorities found fingerprints and a couple of personal items. Interviews were conducted with anyone that interacted with him and a police sketch artist was able to create a facial composite of the man. While the police did interview some people, they were unable to find any conclusive answers. Searching the areas where the man may have jumped was very difficult because no one knew exactly where and when he was able to jump and if he even survived.

1. What is a facial composite?
   a. video footage
   b. photograph
   c. drawing

2. What does conclusive mean?
   a. certain
   b. adequate
   c. false

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What is a central idea of today's passage?
   a. Police knew who the hijacker was, but couldn't find him.
   b. No one could describe the hijacker.
   c. Despite their efforts, authorities didn't know who the hijacker was.
Day 5

The FBI searched **extensively** to try to find the hijacker or at least the money he received. Based on information from the pilot, they tried to determine the area where he most likely would have jumped and put a lot of resources into the search there. Regular citizens even participated in the search for the hijacker and the money he had with him. Later, the FBI published the serial numbers for the ransom money and offered a financial **incentive** for turning the money in. None was ever turned in. Nearly a decade afterwards, a young boy found three bundles of money while out camping. The FBI confirmed the money matched the serial numbers of the ransom money. It was assumed that the money had floated down the river, but one of the bundles was missing 10 bills. The FBI never believed that the hijacker survived the jump, but there has never been any evidence to prove that.

1. What does extensively mean?
   a. thoroughly  
   b. partially  
   c. quickly

2. What does incentive mean?
   a. requirement  
   b. reward  
   c. ransom

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. Write an objective summary of today’s passage.

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

5. What do you believe happened to the hijacker? Support your answer with evidence from any passage.

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________
Day 1

Pacy sat by the door and fretfully waited for a knock. She looked at the clock and realized that there was no way they would make the movie at this point. Her dad had already given up on driving her anywhere and had gone back to work in his office. Pacy looked back at the text conversation between her and Alexis from earlier that day. Alexis had said she wanted to go see a movie with Pacy and she promised she would come on time.

Pacy checked her phone after the buzz of a new message. "Sorry. Can't make it today." Pacy sighed and threw her phone on her bed. She had lost count of how many times Alexis had canceled at the very last minute. After talking about it with her mom and sister, Pacy decided that she was tired of being disappointed and would not try to hang out with Alexis again.

1. What is the meaning of fretfully?
   a. anxiously
   b. happily
   c. casually

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today's passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

Day 2

Ms. Rojas assigned the project in class a month before it was due. It was an alphabet booklet that showed different examples of math with 26 required pages and it seemed easy enough at the time. Rachel's best friend, Ayanna, immediately began working on it and completed one page a night. Rachel thought it was silly that Ayanna had already started working on it because the due date was weeks away. As the due date loomed closer, Ayanna tried to bring up the project but Rachel was very rude about it. Rachel finally began the project two days before it was due but quickly became overwhelmed with all the work she had to do. The next day Rachel stayed up until early in the morning finishing the project even though she skipped many of the required parts. When the projects were returned, Ayanna received an A while Rachel was unwilling to show her grade to anyone.

1. What is the meaning of loomed?
   a. stopped
   b. left
   c. approached

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today's passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
Day 3

Devon had stayed up a little bit later the night before studying for the science quiz with the help of his mom. She had even helped him make flash cards to memorize the formulas. He hadn’t done that well on the previous quiz and he wanted to bring his grade back up. His mom was her usual supportive self and had even included a good luck note in his lunch bag that morning. His friend Nathan asked him if he had studied at the start of class. During the quiz, Nathan kept asking Devon for the answers. At first Devon tried to ignore him but eventually he slid his paper over so that Nathan could see. Their teacher noticed immediately and wrote a zero at the top of the paper right before he confiscated the quizzes from both boys.

1. What is the meaning of confiscated?
   a. released
   b. removed
   c. threw

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

Day 4

Cali’s mom gave her $50 and a shopping list. Cali had protested against going but relented when her mom told her that she could keep the change. Cali had been saving up for a phone for a few months and wasn’t that far away so the extra money would really help. On the way to the store, she passed by a parking lot where people often sold stuff out of their cars on the weekends. As she was walking by she saw an official looking sign advertising cell phones. The phones were the newest model, so she walked up and asked how much they were. The guy told her that they were usually $200 but because it was the last one and he wanted to go home he would sell it to her for $50. Cali couldn’t believe her luck! These phones were over $400 and she was about to get one for $50. The box was brand new and still sealed, so she happily handed over the money and went home to get more grocery money out of her savings. As she was telling her mom what happened she opened up the box only to find that it was filled with rocks.

1. What is the meaning of relented?
   a. argued
   b. gave in
   c. advanced

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
Day 5

The calendar had said "Mother and Son Dinner" all week, but somehow Axel had forgotten about their plans when Friday morning came around. At breakfast, he asked his mom if he could go to his friend's house after school. Judging by the look on his mom's face he thought she would say no, but she said that it was fine and not to be late. He had no idea what she meant by not being late but he was so elated that she said yes that he just ignored it. The school day seemed to go by slowly, but finally the bell rang to herald the end of the day. Axel was invited to stay for dinner as soon as he got to his friend's house. He immediately said yes knowing that his mom wouldn't mind.

Axel and his friend hung out and played video games and he only realized that he hadn't asked permission to stay later when his friend's mom announced that dinner was ready. He hadn't checked his phone in a while and had several messages from his mom and a missed call. The messages were asking where he was. He didn't think too much of it until he got a message from his sister asking where he was that included a picture of the calendar. Axel's heart dropped and he immediately ran home. When he got home, he saw that his mom had cooked all of his favorite foods and was watching his favorite movie in the living room alone.

1. What is the meaning of elated as it is used in the passage?
   a. confused
   b. excited
   c. annoyed

2. What is the meaning of herald as it is used in the passage?
   a. signal
   b. delay
   c. introduce

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answer to 1 & 2.

4. What is the theme of today's passage?

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________

5. Write a summary of today's passage.

   ________________________________________________________________

   ________________________________________________________________
Day 1

Juliane Koepcke was a senior in high school in 1971. Her parents were two zoologists who spent a lot of time in the rainforest studying animals. They all lived in the rainforest together at one point, but Koepcke moved back to her hometown of Lima, Peru in order to finish high school. She decided to fly back to the rainforest with her mother to be reunited with her father for Christmas after she graduated in December. They had to fly using an infamous airline that had a lot of negative press because two of the airline's planes had recently crashed. The bad reputation was cause for concern for Koepcke's mother, but she was willing to risk it in order to make sure that the family was together for the holiday.

1. What is zoology?
   a. the study of air travel
   b. the study of rainforests
   c. the study of animals

2. What does infamous mean?
   a. shameful
   b. popular
   c. expensive

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about today's passage?
   a. Juliane Koepcke's mother still felt the airline was safe.
   b. Koepcke's family did not value spending holidays together.
   c. Juliane Koepcke was committed to studying zoology.

Day 2

The flight from Lima, Peru to the Koepcke's rainforest home was scheduled to take less than an hour. The first half of the flight was smooth, but the plane encountered a storm about halfway through the flight. Turbulence jolted the plane so badly that wrapped Christmas presents and luggage went flying wildly through the air. There was thunder and lightning all around and Koepcke was very afraid. Koepcke heard a loud explosion and the plane shook and then began to plummet in a nose dive towards the ground. Koepcke lost consciousness as the plane broke apart in the air. Koepcke came to and found herself spinning down towards the rainforest below. She was still strapped in her seat and passed out again as she was free falling towards the trees below her.

1. What does jolted mean?
   a. lifted
   b. shook
   c. hindered

2. What does plummet mean?
   a. glide
   b. fly
   c. fall

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What is the central idea of today's passage?
   a. The plane flew through a violent thunderstorm.
   b. A thunderstorm damaged the plane in the air.
   c. Koepcke was ejected from the plane before the storm.
Day 3

Koepcke woke up hours later to see the sun shining brightly through the canopy of leaves overhead. While she still felt out of it, she immediately realized that she had survived unscathed and felt pain from what would later be discovered as a broken collarbone. She had other injuries which included some deep cuts on her arms and legs. Her left eye was also swollen shut and she’d lost her glasses in her descent from the plane to the ground. She heard planes flying overhead that were looking for wreckage from the crash. She knew they wouldn’t be able to see her through the trees. Despite her injuries, she was still able to walk and she began walking to find help.

1. What does unscathed mean?
   a. unhurt
   b. completely
   c. injured

2. What does descent mean?
   a. leap
   b. fall
   c. soar

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about today’s passage?
   a. No one knew the plane had crashed.
   b. Officials were aware that the plane had crashed.
   c. No one knew exactly why the plane had crashed.

Day 4

Juliane Koepcke knew she needed to find help as soon as possible in order to have any prospect of survival. She wasn’t afraid of the rainforest because she had spent enough time with her parents as a child there. Her father had always told her that she needed to find a stream and walk beside it if she was ever lost because it would eventually lead her to a river and a village or city. She didn’t have much in the way of food, but she did find a bag of candy from the crash that she picked up and ate along the way. She knew early on that she would not be able to subsist off of that candy alone. She came across some wreckage from the crash soon after she began walking, but she was unable to find any more food.

1. What does prospect mean?
   a. chance
   b. profit
   c. reality

2. What does subsist mean?
   a. act
   b. cease
   c. survive

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. How did Koepcke’s childhood help her after the crash?
   a. Her father taught her how to search for food.
   b. She spent time in the rainforest and was comfortable there.
   c. She knew which plants and animals to seek out.
Day 5

Juliane Koepcke’s trek through the rainforest looking for help had been miserable. She lost a shoe and her glasses in the crash. She only had on a short dress which did little to keep her warm during the cold nights. It rained frequently and she was bitten by a variety of insects which kept her from sleeping at night. To make matters worse, the deep cuts on her arm from the crash were infected. She was very worried that she would lose her arm. She ran out of the candy she had found and was beginning to give up hope. She came across a stream and stayed in the water as much as possible because she felt that was safer.

Nine days after the crash, Koepcke came across a boat in a shelter. She immediately went and found gasoline that she poured on the wound in her arm in an attempt to help with healing. She considered taking the boat but she had reservations because she didn’t want to steal it. She spent the night there and the next day she was discovered by several men. They immediately began to help her with her injuries and gave her food to eat. She had to endure a seven-hour canoe ride and was then airlifted to a hospital. Ten days after the plane crash, Juliane Koepcke was finally reunited with her father who had no idea that she had survived the plane crash.

1. What is the meaning of trek as it is used in the passage?
   a. climb
   b. trip
   c. ordeal

2. What is the meaning of reservations as it is used in the passage?
   a. objections
   b. confidence
   c. questions

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What was the most important factor in Juliane Koepcke’s survival?
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5. Write an objective summary of today’s passage.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
Day 1

Daylight saving time is observed in many different places throughout the world including the United States, Canada, Australia and many countries in Europe. Countries began temporarily switching to daylight saving time during World War I and World War II. The rationale behind the move was that people would use less resources such as coal, if it stayed lighter outside later in the day. In the United States, the permanent adoption of daylight saving time occurred in 1966, but not every state participates. The actual resource saving benefits of the time change are inconclusive, but many people do enjoy the extra daylight after work or school.

1. What is the central idea of the passage?
2. What inference can be made about resources during World Wars I & II?
3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Daylight saving time began temporarily, but is now used in many countries.</th>
<th>a. Daylight was scarce during the wars.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Daylight saving time was popular when it started.</td>
<td>b. Resources such as coal were scarce during the wars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. In the United States, daylight saving time began in 1966.</td>
<td>c. There were not any actual shortages during the wars.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Day 2

Metaphors are a common example of figurative language that students are exposed to as early as elementary school. At that level, metaphors are often taught as the companion to the simile, which is a comparison of two unlike things using like or as, while the metaphor is a comparison that does not use like or as. As students begin to read increasingly challenging texts, they run into more complicated metaphors. Simple metaphors transition to more challenging examples of figurative language that are sometimes difficult for students to identify and understand. The extended metaphor is a longer metaphor that builds throughout multiple sentences or paragraphs.

1. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
2. What inference can be made from today’s passage?
3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Students are introduced to metaphors in elementary school.</th>
<th>a. Extended metaphors are usually found in more challenging texts.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. Metaphors are very similar to similes, but are not the same.</td>
<td>b. Similes are only used during elementary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Metaphors are comparisons and can be complicated.</td>
<td>c. Metaphors and similes are identical.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 3

For hopeful professional football players, the prospect of being drafted can seem overwhelming because the odds are often against them. One way for players to stand out is to be in top physical condition. Potential football players have to be able to show coaches their power and abilities. Athletes have to show how strong and fast they are and should be able to show coaches and scouts the ways they can take advantage of their size. Opportunities for athletes to showcase their abilities include the 40-yard dash and the vertical jump. The vertical jump requires players to jump from a standing position and some top athletes can jump over 40 inches.

1. What is the central idea of today's passage?
   a. It is difficult to become a professional football player.
   b. The vertical jump is a challenging task that involves jumping after standing still.
   c. Hopeful football players have to be in peak physical shape.

2. What inference can be made about football players?
   a. Many hopeful athletes do not get drafted to play football.
   b. The vertical jump is a requirement.
   c. The 40-yard dash is a short race.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

Day 4

When the internet first became popular in the United States, Wi-Fi was not an option. Computers all across the country used phone lines to connect to the internet, which was known as dial-up internet. In hindsight, there were lots of problems with dial-up internet, but at the time it was the only option many people had to access the internet. Dial-up internet required an open phone line, so if someone's parents were on the phone, then getting on the internet to do homework would have to wait. When someone called, the internet connection was often lost. Once internet service became popular, a lot of people had trouble connecting and would have to wait to log on to the internet. While there were many drawbacks to dial-up internet, the benefits outweighed them at the time.

1. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
   a. Wireless internet is popular today.
   b. Dial-up internet had its flaws, but was still useful.
   c. There were many downsides to dial-up internet.

2. What inference can be made about phone lines?
   a. You could not use the internet and make a call from the same phone line.
   b. The phone lines were not connected to the internet.
   c. You could use the internet and make a call from the same phone line.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.
Day 5

For anyone looking forward to sledding and playing in the snow, freezing rain can be a frustrating disappointment. Along with snow and sleet, freezing rain is a type of winter precipitation. Freezing rain occurs when liquid precipitation falls and freezes when it comes into contact with surfaces that are below freezing. Freezing rain happens when the air in the atmosphere is above freezing, which either melts precipitation that would have fallen as snow or sleet, or prevents it from freezing to begin with. The rain then falls through a colder layer of air, which acts to cool the rain down, allowing some of it to freeze as soon as it lands on a freezing surface. This can occur on trees, power lines, sidewalks and even roadways.

Freezing rain can cause significant damage and disruption to daily life when anything more than a glaze falls. Even a light glaze on sidewalks and roadways can make walking and driving anywhere incredibly dangerous. Freezing rain that accumulates to more than a quarter of an inch can cause downed trees, which can take weeks to clean up. The weight of the ice on trees and powerlines can also cause widespread power outages, which cause great inconveniences to people and can even cause safety hazards. Repairing a downed power line or restoring power can take days or longer.

1. What is a central idea of today’s passage?

   a. Fallen trees can cause power outages and take time to clean up.
   b. Freezing rain can occur on powerlines and sidewalks.
   c. Freezing rain falls as a liquid and can cause a lot of damage.

2. What inference can be made from today’s passage?

   a. Repairing fallen power lines can be a complicated process.
   b. Warmer air temperatures in the atmosphere are uncommon.
   c. Sleet is the most common type of winter precipitation.

3. What is the meaning of accumulates as it is used in the passage?

   a. falls
   b. deteriorates
   c. builds up

4. Write a summary of today’s passage.
Day 1

The legend of the Oak Island money pit has intrigued people for centuries. Oak Island, an island off the coast of Canada, is home to a curious pit that has been the focus of many fortune seekers throughout the years. It all began in the late 1790s when a young man found a mysterious indentation in the ground. The young man believed the indentation meant that maybe something had been buried there. There had long been rumors of pirate's treasure that had been buried on the island or nearby, and the man thought that he had potentially stumbled on it. Shortly after finding the area, he recruited friends to help him dig. While their search didn't turn up any valuable treasure, every ten feet they uncovered wooden platforms that had been mysteriously buried. They eventually gave up after finding nothing but buried platforms.

1. What does intrigued mean?
   a. scared
   b. interested
   c. confused

2. What does indentation mean?
   a. a raised area
   b. a lowered area
   c. a bush

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about today's passage?
   a. The young man believed something was buried in the area near the indentation.
   b. Nothing was buried near the indentation.
   c. Something was buried near the indentation.

Day 2

The rumors and mystery surrounding the area persisted. Years later, the Onslow company decided to take a risk on the rumors and invest their time and money into the area. Just like the first time, they kept finding wooden platforms every ten feet. Interestingly enough, at about 60 feet down, they found a layer of coconut shells. They continued to dig and at 90 feet down discovered something more perplexing than the wooden platforms and coconut shells. At 90 feet down, they discovered a stone inscribed in strange symbols that no one was able to decipher. While this discovery was interesting, no one was any closer to being able to answer what, if anything, the pit actually contained.

1. What does persisted mean?
   a. returned
   b. faded
   c. lasted

2. What does decipher mean?
   a. visualize
   b. curious
   c. understand

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What is the central idea of today's passage?
   a. While mysterious items were found, no treasure had been found in the pit.
   b. The pit didn't contain anything.
   c. The pit was a trap.
**Day 3**

The curious stone was **inscribed** with symbols that no one could immediately understand. Several **cryptographers** became involved and attempted to break the mysterious code. Eventually, someone was able to determine that the inscription said: "Forty feet below, two million pounds lies buried." A pound is a form of British money and two million pounds is worth around 2.5 million U.S. dollars, a staggering amount now and enough money then to motivate most people to participate in the search. The company continued digging, but soon ran into trouble when the pit flooded once they reached a certain depth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What does inscribed mean?</th>
<th>3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 &amp; 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. painted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. carved</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. decorated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. What is a cryptographer?</th>
<th>4. Why would the author include the meaning of the symbols on the stone?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. someone that looks for treasure</td>
<td>a. To help the readers understand how intriguing the stone was.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. someone that solves riddles and codes</td>
<td>b. To confuse the reader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. a historian</td>
<td>c. To make the reader look for clues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Day 4**

After the Onslow company gave up, the pit was left abandoned for years. The Onslow company had dug down at least 90 feet, but once the pit began to flood, the water rose 60 feet. Later, another company decided to take up the task of **excavating** the pit in hopes of finding potential treasure. They attempted to use a pump to drain the water, but the pump failed and they gave up. Throughout the years there were multiple attempts to find the treasure. One attempt ended with a collapsed platform that led many to believe the area had been **sabotaged** in order to protect it. As time has passed, the mystery surrounding the pit has increased, yet no one has found anything.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What does excavating mean?</th>
<th>3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 &amp; 2.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. bury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. dig out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. researching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. What does sabotaged mean?</th>
<th>4. What is a central idea of today’s passage?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. destroy intentionally</td>
<td>a. Despite difficulties, people continued to look without success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. left out in the open</td>
<td>b. The treasure was found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. hidden</td>
<td>c. No one tried to search in the pit and no treasure was found.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 5

Throughout the years many people and companies have unsuccessfully attempted to locate the hidden treasure in the pit. These attempts have been very expensive and yet the treasure, if it exists at all, remains hidden. Despite the lack of any real evidence, there are a number of theories that explain what may be hidden that has eluded people for centuries. One theory is that the pit contains treasure buried by pirates and some believe that the pirate may have even been Blackbeard. A different theory suggests that the pit doesn't contain any treasure at all and is simply leftover from a time when the island was used for the production of tar. Another theory speculates that the pit isn't actually manmade and is a sinkhole that has collected debris over the years. Despite current technology and prolonged interest in the pit, no one knows what the pit contains.

1. What does eluded mean?
   a. searched
   b. puzzled
   c. found

2. What does speculates mean?
   a. suggests
   b. determines
   c. proves

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. Write an objective summary of today's passage.

5. Which theory do you think is the least likely to be true? Support your answer with evidence from any passage.
**Day 1**

Dirk was running late for his job interview, but it didn’t matter because he knew he would get the job. He had felt that way about the previous jobs he had applied for, but he was still unemployed. He wasn’t too worried about leaving the house late because he was such a great driver he would be able to make the time up. Unfortunately, his unparalleled driving skills did not prevent him from getting stuck in traffic and he pulled into the parking lot late. He found a parking space up front, but someone had gotten there first and was trying to pull in as he cut them off. The driver of the other car honked and drove away as Dirk laughed at their incompetence. Dirk was relieved to hear that his interviewer was running late, but panicked when the driver of the car Dirk had cut off in the parking lot introduced himself as his interviewer.

1. What is the meaning of unparalleled?
   a. strange
   b. exceptional
   c. adequate

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

**Day 2**

Jason liked to brag that his father was a lawyer. Technically, this was true, but Jason’s father had never set foot in a courtroom. He worked for a hospital dealing with insurance companies all day long. Jason liked to leave that fact out whenever he felt he had been wronged and threatened to have his father file a lawsuit. It may have been because people didn’t want to deal with a spoiled brat, but this strategy typically worked for Jason. One day, Jason’s father walked in when he was chastising a friend over a video game. Jason told his friend that his father would take his entire family’s life savings if he didn’t give in to Jason’s demands. Jason’s father walked up to his son’s friend and introduced himself by saying he didn’t actually handle lawsuits and that Jason was grounded.

1. What is the meaning of chastising?
   a. scolding
   b. encouraging
   c. talking

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
### Day 3

Cameron had seen the new girl walking around with the school counselor earlier that day and couldn’t help but perceive how angry she looked. Maybe angry wasn’t the right word, but she definitely didn’t look like she was there to make friends. She was in his fourth period class and she refused to get out of her seat when the teacher tried to introduce her. It didn’t take very long for rumors to spread about how mean she was. Cameron wasn’t surprised to see her sitting by herself at lunch. He initially went to sit with his friends, but he couldn’t help but think about how awful it would be to eat by yourself on the first day at a new school, so he went to sit with her. His heart raced as he walked up to her because he didn’t want her to be mean to him. As soon as he sat down beside her, she began talking about how happy she was that she didn’t have to eat lunch alone and how nervous she was earlier in the day.

1. What is the meaning of perceive?
   - a. notice
   - b. question
   - c. ignore

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

### Day 4

Kyra had always been afraid of heights. It was so bad that she even avoided taking the escalator at the mall. Her friends had been planning a hiking trip for weeks and Kyra had enthusiastically said yes because she didn’t realize that they would be hiking near some very steep cliffs. Once she found that out she immediately came up with an excuse for why she couldn’t go. Her best friend, Maya, knew why she didn’t want to go and immediately sat out to change her mind. She even showed her pictures from other people’s hiking trips. Kyra was very nervous but she finally acquiesced and decided to go. She didn’t get any sleep the night before because she was so nervous. She got up early and almost canceled but didn’t want to hear Maya complain. As they started hiking, Kyra felt dizzy and was worried she would pass out but she pressed on. She began to feel better as they got closer to the top. Once they arrived at the top, Kyra couldn’t believe how beautiful the view was.

1. What is the meaning of acquiesced?
   - a. refused
   - b. gave in
   - c. rejected

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
Day 5

Malik just wanted to go home. When his dad first mentioned the family beach trip he had pretended to be interested because he didn’t think it would actually happen. He was wrong about the trip and had spent the past few days being annoyed by his cousins at the beach. He liked his aunt and uncle, but he had definitely spent enough time with his family and just wanted to be alone. His uncle suggested they go to the aquarium on the last day of the trip. Malik was annoyed because he wanted to be alone and not feel pressured to go look at some dumb fish. He initially said that he would go, but he feigned having a headache so that he could stay behind. Everyone was very upset that Malik wouldn’t be going but eventually left.

Malik enjoyed the quiet for a few minutes and then began to regret staying behind. His aunt and uncle lived hours away and he wouldn’t get to see them for at least several months, and he did like his cousins even though they irritated him. His feelings of regret were only made worse every time he checked his phone. His family kept posting pictures and it looked like they were having a wondrous time. His dad had been picked to go on stage during a show and there was a video of it. When everyone got back, they began to tell him stories about the trip. His grandfather, who almost never smiled, was laughing so hard he was crying. His cousins picked out a book for him from the gift shop and even paid for it with their own money.

1. What is the meaning of feigned as it is used in the passage?
   a. confused
   b. pretended
   c. stated

2. What is the meaning of wondrous as it is used in the passage?
   a. alright
   b. amazing
   c. quick

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answer to 1 & 2.

4. What is the theme of today’s passage?

5. Write a summary of today’s passage.
Day 1

Sailing around the world can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be very dangerous. Dougal Robertson lived with his wife, Lyn, and their four children in a remote area of England that was far away from any busy cities. Robertson decided he wanted to expose his family to the world far beyond their farm and planned a trip to sail around the globe. He spent his family’s savings on a boat and designed a route that would take them well over a year to complete. Dougal Robertson had previous experience sailing but had long since retired. Robertson was looking forward to relying on his past experiences at sea while his family lived a nomadic lifestyle as they sailed all over the world.

1. What is the meaning of remote?
   a. popular
   b. radio
   c. isolated

2. What is the meaning of nomadic?
   a. stable
   b. wandering
   c. boring

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. Why did Dougal Robertson decide to sail around the world with his family?
   a. He didn’t like farming.
   b. He had a lot of experience sailing.
   c. He wanted his family to see the world.

Day 2

The family set sail on January 1, 1971, on a 43-foot long schooner that they named the Lucette. The first 18 months went by without any serious trouble. There had been some problems, but overall the trip had gone very smoothly. For nearly a year and a half, the Robertsons sailed in the Atlantic Ocean and stopped at various places in the Caribbean to pick up supplies and visit new places. Over the course of their journey, one of the children decided to end her trip early and the family picked up an additional passenger that they met along the way. The relative ease of the first part of their excursion may have given them a false sense of security because they had little idea of the trouble that was ahead.

1. What is the meaning of schooner?
   a. shelf
   b. ship
   c. vehicle

2. What is the meaning of excursion?
   a. exercise
   b. arrival
   c. journey

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference could be made about today’s passage?
   a. The family did not anticipate having any problems on the trip.
   b. All of the children wanted to continue on the trip.
   c. There were many warning signs once they started their journey.
Day 3

The months of smooth sailing came to an abrupt end soon after the Lucette entered the Pacific Ocean. The family was startled by a loud boom and then realized that their ship was being attacked by a group of killer whales. The attack caused significant damage to the Lucette and the family quickly clambered off the ship. They had both an inflatable lifeboat and a dinghy to use in case the Lucette sank. Shortly after the initial attack, the Robertsons watched the boat that had been their home for many months disappear under the water. What had started out as a fantastic opportunity to travel the world had quickly turned into a desperate fight for survival.

1. What is the meaning of abrupt?
   a. gruff
   b. sudden
   c. gradual

2. What is the meaning of clambered?
   a. climbed
   b. swam
   c. hid

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about killer whales?
   a. Killer whales do not normally attack humans.
   b. The killer whales may have felt threatened by the ship.
   c. Killer whale sightings are unusual in the Pacific.

Day 4

The Robertsons hastily got off the sinking ship and didn’t have time to grab many provisions. They only had a small amount of food which included some fruit and cookies. The adult members of the family realized how dangerous the situation was and they limited food in order to make it last as long as possible. The food lasted around a week and then the family caught fish and turtles to eat. The family may have been surrounded by water, but none of it was safe to drink. They had some containers that were used to catch rainwater. The inflatable raft was small and uncomfortable but was the family’s best option. Unfortunately, the inflatable life raft began to fail and the family’s situation became even worse.

1. What is the meaning of hastily?
   a. quickly
   b. independently
   c. intentionally

2. What is the meaning of provisions?
   a. luggage
   b. paperwork
   c. supplies

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
   a. The family survived on fish and turtles.
   b. The family had limited access to food and water.
   c. The family was able to drink rainwater.
Day 5

Bad luck for the family continued when their inflatable lifeboat sank. While the lifeboat was far from comfortable, it was more **capacious** than the final boat that the family had to cram in, which was only 10 feet long. There was only a small section of the boat that wasn’t always wet, and the family took turns so that everyone had a chance to sit in the dry seat. The Robertsons were quickly running out of supplies. To make matters worse, sharks circled their small boat on a regular basis.

The Robertsons had been rowing daily to try to make it back to land, although it was unlikely that they would be successful. As luck would have it, the family’s small boat was spotted by a Japanese fishing boat 38 days after the Lucette sank. Initially the crew of the fishing boat assumed no one was on such a small boat in the middle of the ocean, but luckily they investigated. The Robertsons were overwhelmed with joy and gratitude for surviving their **harrowing** ordeal. Years later, the father wrote a novel telling his family’s story of survival. He used the money he made from writing the book to buy a boat while the mother opted to stay behind on their family farm.

1. What is the meaning of capacious as it is used in the passage?
   a. miniscule  
   b. spacious  
   c. homey

2. What is the meaning of harrowing as it is used in the passage?
   a. disturbing  
   b. joyful  
   c. boring

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What was the most important factor in the family’s survival?

5. Write an objective summary of today’s passage.
Day 1

Treo the dog became famous for his service to his home country of Britain. Treo did not seek out a military career, but was donated to the military by his owner because of behavioral issues. Treo went through a three month long class that all military animals have to take before they are deployed. Treo was sent to Afghanistan in 2008, and there he worked to protect British troops. In Afghanistan, Treo did an exceptional job of detecting improvised explosive devices, which are commonly known as IEDs. IEDs are explosives and were often used as roadside bombs in Afghanistan. Treo did such a great job detecting IEDs that the enemy actually complained about him and how effective he was. Treo’s work saved many lives and after seven years in the military, he was able to retire and rest until he passed away.

1. What is the central idea of the passage?
2. What inference can be made about IEDs?
3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

   a. A British dog served in the military and saved many lives.
   b. IEDs are used as roadside bombs.
   c. The military is a good place for rebellious animals.
   a. IEDs are difficult to build and detonate.
   b. IEDs can be very deadly.
   c. IEDs were not used very frequently.

Day 2

Polio, also known as poliomyelitis, is a devastating disease that terrified children and families before a vaccination was created. Polio is very contagious and incredibly dangerous in young children. Early symptoms of polio include sore throat, upset stomach and fever. In a small percentage of cases, the virus can attack the brain and spinal cord, which can lead to paralysis or even death. In the United States, polio outbreaks frightened families who felt helpless in protecting their children from the disease. The onset of the polio vaccine helped stop the spread of polio and the United States was declared polio free in 1994. Unfortunately, in some countries that do not have access to the vaccine, many children still have to suffer the effects of this disease.

1. What is the central idea of today's passage?
2. What inference can be made from today’s passage?
3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

   a. Polio is very contagious and can cause paralysis or even death.
   b. The polio vaccine has saved many lives.
   c. Polio is very serious, but a vaccination now exists.
   a. Polio is not much more serious than a cold.
   b. The polio vaccine cannot prevent the disease in all people.
   c. Many people who get Polio do recover.
Day 3

Eating contests have been around for years. More recently, many competitive eating contests have focused on consuming as many hot dogs in a specific amount of time as possible. There are some annual competitions that receive a lot of media attention. One event has even aired on television. The winners of some hot dog eating competitions have consumed as many as 70 hot dogs in a span of ten minutes. There are a number of strategies that competitors use in order to win. Some people will avoid eating anything in the days leading up to the competition. Another popular strategy is to dunk the food in water, which will help with chewing. Nearly every competitor will shove as much food into their cheeks as they can in the last few moments of the competition, in order to get their numbers up.

1. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
   a. Eating competitions have a long history.
   b. Eating competitions are popular and competitors have specific strategies.
   c. Dunking food in water helps during competitions.

2. What inference can be made about competitive eaters?
   a. It is difficult to consume more than ten hot dogs.
   b. The strategies people use are generally unhelpful.
   c. Successful competitors enjoy some degree of fame.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

Day 4

Most students today go to school in large buildings that contain multiple rooms, but this wasn’t always the case. Years ago, in rural parts of the United States, children went to school in buildings that only had one room. The students that attended school there would be in the same class as everyone else that lived nearby, regardless of their age. The students all had the same teacher, but learned different things throughout the day. The older students would often help the younger students in their studies and may also have had to help maintain the fire in the building during the winter months. Often children did not go to school through the 12th grade, as many students had to stay home and take on more responsibility as they got older.

1. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
   a. Students in rural areas went to smaller schools with fewer options.
   b. Education has changed in recent years.
   c. In the past, children did not always go to school for as many years.

2. What inference can be made about the passage?
   a. Education was not considered as important in rural areas many years ago.
   b. Children in different grades all did the same thing.
   c. Older students had to take on less responsibility.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.
Day 5

Sears home kits were kits that were sold by the retailer Sears that included all of the parts necessary to build a home. The kits, once purchased, would be delivered via railcar and then by truck to the site of the new home, where the new owner would assemble them, often with the help of others. The service lasted for more than 30 years, beginning in 1908, and more than 70,000 homes of this type were built. Home kits were available with many different add-ons, such as kits that included additional materials for plumbing fixtures or higher-quality or specialty items. In their peak, a large number of competing home kit suppliers existed, and many of them used very similar designs. The program ended in the early 1940s, although most of the homes built using the kits still exist today. Finding these homes can be quite a challenge, as there is no official record of which homes were built using the Sears kits. Home kits of this type are no longer available in the United States, although many home builders offer a similar approach in offering model homes that can be purchased through the builder and then customized by the buyer. Although still long off from reality, 3D printing technology may allow home builders of the future to create any home they desire, in a way using the idea that was started by Sears in the early 1900s.

1. What is a central idea of today’s passage?
   
   a. There were many ways to customize home kits.
   b. Home kits were delivered by train and then by truck to the site of the new home.
   c. In the past, home kits were a popular and unique way to build a new home.

2. What is the effect of the last sentence on the passage?
   
   a. It explains the possibility of technology changing the way homes are built.
   b. It suggests that home kits will once again become popular options.
   c. It implies that home kits will never be used again.

3. What inference can be made about homes built from these kits?
   
   a. They were well built and made of quality materials.
   b. They were too expensive for most families to buy.
   c. The homes were made of low quality materials.

4. Write a summary of today’s passage.
Day 1

Construction on the Flannan Isles lighthouse off the coast of Scotland was finished in 1899. One year later, the lighthouse became the setting to a mystery that has perplexed people to this day. The goal of the lighthouse was to show ships where to go and to warn of potential danger ahead. The lighthouse itself was constructed on an isolated island that only the three keepers of the lighthouse lived on. People living near the island had long heard rumors and superstitions about the island being a dangerous place. Things were fine with the lighthouse for most of the first year, but in the year 1900, the lighthouse became the center of a mystery that remains unsolved.

1. What does perplexed mean?
   a. burdened
   b. interested
   c. confused

2. What does isolated mean?
   a. populated
   b. forested
   c. lonely

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about today’s passage?
   a. Something significant happened on the island.
   b. The lighthouse is no longer in use.
   c. The lighthouse is a popular landmark.

Day 2

The mystery began when a ship passed by the island and noted that the lighthouse was not illuminated. This was reported because a working light was necessary for safety, yet nothing was immediately done. Later, a ship that regularly delivered supplies and materials arrived late because it had been delayed for a few days because of the weather. The crew on the supply ship was surprised to see that nothing had been left out to hold the new supplies. The crew was also shocked to see the flag that was usually prominently displayed on the flagpole was missing. To add to this mystery, no lighthouse crew member showed up to greet the supply ship.

1. What does illuminated mean?
   a. working
   b. broken
   c. lit up

2. What does prominently mean?
   a. obviously
   b. hidden
   c. secretly

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be drawn from today’s passage?
   a. It was very concerning that the lighthouse was not illuminated.
   b. No one was really concerned about the lighthouse not being illuminated.
   c. The flag was not regularly displayed.
Day 3

Someone aboard the relief ship sounded an alarm and flashed a light, yet no one in the lighthouse responded. A few members of the ship’s crew went aground and still could not locate the men, but they did find some concerning clues. The doors were closed and the men searching found that the beds were unmade. Perhaps the most concerning of all is that the clock had simply stopped working. Further searching found that one waterproof uniform had been left abandoned. In the kitchen, a plate of unconsumed food had been left out and a chair was knocked over.

1. What does aground mean?
   a. on earth
   b. buried
   c. on shore

2. What does unconsumed mean?
   a. uneaten
   b. unattractive
   c. uncooked

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What inference can be made about today’s passage?
   a. There were enough clues to figure out what happened.
   b. The men living in the lighthouse left willingly.
   c. It is not clear why the clock stopped working.

Day 4

The search continued and the island was scoured. There were signs of extensive wind damages from storms on one side of the island, including iron railings that had been bent over. Those in the search crew also found a diary that contained regular updates of what was going on at the lighthouse up until December 15. The diary documented incredibly strong winds in the days leading up to the last entry and also noted that the men, seasoned veterans, were afraid. The entries discussing the storms and wind were perplexing because nearby weather reports indicated that the weather had been pleasant on the island during that time period.

1. What does scoured mean?
   a. reported
   b. searched extensively
   c. retreated

2. What does seasoned mean?
   a. experienced
   b. new
   c. bad

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What is a central idea of today’s passage?
   a. The diary was incorrect.
   b. The search turned up a lot of useful information.
   c. Information found in the search created more questions than answers.
Day 5

The search was eventually abandoned and no one knows exactly what happened at the lighthouse after the diary entries stopped. A report was officially sent in and the lighthouse had new men assigned to it. Of course, there are some theories about what happened. The most pervasive theory, which is believed by many, is that the island was struck by a powerful storm and the men were washed out to sea. As believable as this is, nearby weather reports showed no signs of inclement weather until days after the last diary entry. Another theory is that the men were attacked and kidnapped by spies from another country. Finally, there is a more questionable theory that suggests that the men were carried off the island by a wild animal.

1. What does pervasive mean?
   a. important
   b. common
   c. confusing

2. What does inclement mean?
   a. cold
   b. rainy
   c. severe

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. Write an objective summary of today's passage.

5. Which theory do you think is the least likely to be true? Support your answer with evidence from any passage.
Day 1

Dylan never listened to what his teacher had to say. He disrupted class so much that he was moved to a desk in the back of the classroom and was completely sequestered from everyone else in the class. Of course, this didn't stop Dylan from continuing to distract his teacher and classmates. His favorite thing to do was lean back and balance on the back two legs of his chair. His teacher constantly told him to stop, and while he would stop briefly when his teacher asked, within a few minutes he was always back at it again. Finally, his teacher gave up and refused to say anything when he would recline backward. It wasn't too long afterwards that his balance gave out and he fell to the ground in the middle of class.

1. What is another word for sequestered?
   a. isolated
   b. included
   c. distracted

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today's passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

Day 2

Tyrone really did not want to sign up for Advanced Chemistry, but his dad made him. He'd heard some of his friends carp about how difficult the class was, and he didn't think he would do well. He was also concerned because he had made the A honor roll for the past few years and he didn't want to ruin his streak. He didn't really understand the homework, but underestimated how far behind he was until he got his first quiz back. The teacher offered tutoring to do corrections, so Tyrone stayed. He learned so much from his first tutoring session that he stayed for every session his teacher offered after that. He worked hard on his homework every night and made sure to ask questions in class. He brought his grade back up to an A. Tyrone would roll his eyes when all of his friends would complain about how it was unfair that Tyrone was naturally so good at chemistry.

1. What is another word for carp?
   a. brag
   b. complain
   c. joke

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to #1?

3. What is the theme of today's passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
Day 3

Samantha and Savannah's mom came home later than usual. Earlier, Samantha had sent her mom a message grousing about being hungry. Savannah decided to go ahead and get started on dinner so it would be ready by the time their mom got home. When their mom arrived, Samantha had already eaten and was busy playing on her phone while Savannah talked to her mom and asked her how her day went. Afterwards, when Samantha was asked to clean up she pretended like she didn’t hear anything. Savannah told her mom to relax and cleaned up after she had already cooked. A few hours later both sisters were invited to a party. Savannah asked first and her mom told her that she could go. When Samantha asked if she could go, her mother simply acted like she hadn’t heard her.

1. What is another word for grousing?
   a. telling
   b. complaining
   c. screaming

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to # 1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.

Day 4

Evie did not want to go babysit. She had promised her neighbor last week that she could watch the twins today, but all she wanted to do was watch movies and chat with her friends. She contemplated telling her neighbor she was sick but didn’t because she didn’t want to cancel at the last minute. She was in a bad mood when she got to her neighbor’s house, but the kids were so excited to see Evie that she quickly perked up. Her neighbor had bought all of her favorite snacks and Evie really enjoyed getting to watch movies and play make believe with the twins. She couldn’t believe she had almost canceled because she was having such a great time. When her neighbor got home, she gave Evie a $40 bonus for babysitting on a Saturday night.

1. What is another word for contemplated?
   a. wanted
   b. decided
   c. considered

2. What word or words helped you determine the answer to # 1?

3. What is the theme of today’s passage?

4. Underline evidence in the story that shows the development of the theme.
Day 5

Carrie was very competitive and hated losing. She loved playing all sports but was especially good at soccer. Her team had enjoyed a long winning streak and had a chance to be the conference champions. The semifinal match had been extremely close and Carrie was nervous towards the end of the game. Carrie lost control of herself when her teammate scored the winning goal. She ran to hug her teammates and then started screaming at the losing team. She refused to shake hands with any of the other players and kept calling them losers. A couple of her friends admonished her rude behavior, but she ignored them and continued saying inappropriate things to the other team.

The next week, Carrie's team played in the final match. Carrie's team started strong, but it became clear that they could not keep up with the other team. The score seemed hopeless halfway through and soon the players on the other team began calling them losers and other tactless names. When the match finally ended, the opposing team's insults became even worse. Her teammates shrugged it off, but Carrie was furious about the disrespect she was encountering. She tried to complain to her coach but he was busy talking to parents. When Carrie went up to her friends to complain about the other team they completely ignored her.

1. What is the meaning of admonished as it is used in the passage?
   a. praised
   b. bragged
   c. scolded

2. What is the meaning of tactless as it is used in the passage?
   a. rude
   b. polite
   c. athletic

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answer to 1 & 2.

4. What is the theme of today's passage?

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________

5. Write a summary of today's passage.

   __________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________
Day 1

The Arctic is the northernmost part of Earth and surviving there is incredibly difficult. The weather there is harsh and the few sources of food are difficult to acquire. Ada Blackjack, a young woman in her early 20s, found herself fighting for her life alone in the Arctic after a mission went terribly wrong. Blackjack was born in Alaska and lived there much of her life. She got married at an early age and had three children. Unfortunately, she lost her husband and two of her children to disease. Her remaining child was very sick and Blackjack could not afford to buy medicine. Blackjack decided to sign up to go on a mission to dwell on a remote Russian island in order to claim it for Canada. While Blackjack knew that this would not be an easy way to earn money, she had no idea it would turn into a fight to stay alive.

1. What is the meaning of acquire?
   a. obtain
   b. steal
   c. consume

2. What is the meaning of dwell?
   a. live
   b. search
   c. escape

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What was Blackjack’s true motivation for going on the mission?
   a. She enjoyed the outdoors.
   b. She wanted to help claim the island for Canada.
   c. She needed money for her son’s medicine.

Day 2

Initially, Blackjack was not going to be the only woman on the mission, but the other Eskimo families that had volunteered to go backed out at the last minute. Blackjack changed her mind as well and wanted to forsake the mission, but she was told that more people would be joining them on the island. Blackjack set out with four men who were selected for their knowledge and experience. Her role was to cook and sew for all members of the group and the men would provide food. They only took six month’s worth of supplies even though the mission was planned to last for two years. The men were supposed to hunt and trap animals in order to build up a supply of food. The start of the mission was successful, but difficulty getting additional supplies to the group imperiled everyone on the island.

1. What is the meaning of forsake?
   a. join
   b. abandon
   c. support

2. What is another word for imperiled?
   a. endangered
   b. protected
   c. insulted

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. How did Blackjack feel about going on the mission?
   a. Blackjack had second thoughts about the mission.
   b. Blackjack was always supportive of the mission.
   c. Blackjack had no opinion about the mission.
Day 3

When they first arrived on the island, the men had success hunting and were able to amass a large quantity of meat. However, they were still dependent on the ship that was scheduled to bring supplies. When the ship did not show up as planned, they realized that they would have to do something quickly because their food supplies were running dangerously low. Two of the men left in order to procure supplies but had to return because one of the men was too sick to travel. Shortly after that, they realized they must make another attempt to get more supplies if they were to have any chance of surviving. Since they were without a ship, three of the men were forced to attempt to walk over 700 miles across a frozen sea for help. Blackjack stayed back with the remaining man who was too ill to care for himself.

1. What is the meaning of amass?
   a. spread
   b. purchase
   c. store

2. What is the meaning of procure?
   a. get
   b. reject
   c. pack

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.
   a. Unsuccessful hunting caused the group to face starvation.
   b. A missing supply ship forced group members to seek out more supplies.
   c. The harsh weather made survival more difficult than planned.

Day 4

Ada Blackjack had gone on the mission in order to cook and perform other light duties but became the sole provider for herself and the ailing man who was too sick to travel. While Blackjack wasn’t alone, the remaining man was a burden because taking care of him took so much of her time and energy. He was suffering from scurvy, which was caused by a lack of Vitamin C in his diet. The disease caused him to have muscle pain and constant tiredness. He eventually passed away and Blackjack was left alone except for the company of a cat they had brought with them. Blackjack waited and hoped that the men who left had been successful, but days turned into weeks and the men did not return. Blackjack was forced to face the grim reality that she was stranded and alone in the Arctic with very few supplies.

1. What is the meaning of sole?
   a. important
   b. only
   c. experienced

2. What is the meaning of ailing?
   a. healthy
   b. enthusiastic
   c. sick

3. Underline the clues that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.
4. What inference can be made about today’s passage?
   a. Blackjack anticipated ending up alone on the island.
   b. An unhealthy diet can cause scurvy.
   c. The man had scurvy before he went on the mission.
Day 5

Blackjack may have anticipated having some difficulties on her mission, but she never imagined that she would end up fighting for survival all alone on the island. She had no experience hunting or trapping animals but she was left with no other options and quickly learned. She was able to set traps that helped her capture small animals such as foxes. She also managed to hunt seals and birds. In addition to facing starvation, she also had multiple encounters with dangerous animals. She once had to run back to her tent in order to get away from a menacing polar bear.

Blackjack was rescued two years after she landed on the island and nearly four months after her remaining companion died. Blackjack became a sensation as people learned of her story but she did not enjoy being in the spotlight and did nothing to take advantage of her fame. She used the money she earned from the mission to get medical care for her sick child who then made a full recovery. There were several books that were written about her plight that ended up making a lot of money, but Blackjack didn’t receive any of it. Blackjack ended up marrying again and had another son. She eventually moved back to the Arctic and spent the rest of her life there.

1. What is the meaning of menacing as it is used in the passage?
   a. threatening
   b. welcoming
   c. distant

2. What is the meaning of plight as it is used in the passage?
   a. exciting story
   b. difficult situation
   c. secret past

3. Underline the word or words that helped you determine the answers to 1 & 2.

4. What was the most important factor in Ada Blackjack’s survival?

5. Write an objective summary of today’s passage.
Day 1

The Model T was not the first car, but it was the first car that many Americans owned. Cars had been around for years when the Model T started being produced in 1908, but they were often prohibitively priced, which meant that many people could not afford to purchase them. Ford, the automaker that produced the Model T, developed a factory production line that allowed Model Ts to be produced more affordably, which resulted in a lower price for consumers. The Model T was produced from 1908 – 1927 and over 16 million were sold during that time. The Model T looked very different from modern cars and was only available in a limited number of colors. Missing from the first Model Ts were windshield wipers and radios.

1. What is the central idea of the passage?

2. What inference can be made about today's passage?

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

Day 2

There is no debate regarding which building is the world's tallest skyscraper, but there is debate as to which building was actually the first skyscraper. One building that many consider to be the first skyscraper is the Home Insurance building in Chicago, Illinois. It was built in 1884 and was ten stories tall when it was first built, but later additions made it twelve stories. It was built after the Chicago Fire of 1871, which destroyed many buildings in Chicago. In response to the fire, the Home Insurance building had a fireproof frame made of metal and it was that unique frame that is the reason many consider it to be the world's first skyscraper. Unfortunately, the historic building is not still standing today because it was demolished 47 years after it was built.

1. What is the central idea of today's passage?

2. What inference can be made from today's passage?

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

a. The Home Insurance building was built after the Chicago fire.

b. The Home Insurance building is considered the first skyscraper by some.

c. The Home Insurance building was demolished many years ago.
Day 3

Although popular all over the world, roller coasters had their origins in Russia. As far back as the 1700s, Russians used mountains of ice for sled rides. Later in the United States, a mining company that had created a railway for the transportation of coal began selling rides for thrill-seekers. The idea evolved, and eventually roller coasters on wooden tracks became popular around the country. In 1959, Disneyland debuted the first roller coaster on steel tracks. Wooden roller coasters are still being built today, although the majority of newer roller coasters use steel tracks because they provide smoother and faster rides. The designs of roller coasters have changed dramatically and there seems to be no limit to how high or fast they can go, much to the pleasure of people who enjoy the thrill of riding one.

1. What is the central idea of today's passage?
   a. The Russians invented the first roller coaster.
   b. Roller coasters have changed dramatically over time.
   c. Disneyland created the first roller coaster on steel tracks.

2. What inference can be made about roller coasters?
   a. Most people prefer wooden roller coasters.
   b. Most people prefer steel roller coasters.
   c. No one is sure why roller coasters are so popular.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.

Day 4

Many people are incredibly afraid of snakes. Often just the sound of the rattle of a rattlesnake inspires fear in many, including people that have only heard the sound on television or in movies. The rattlesnake is most commonly found in the American Southwest, although some types have been found in other parts of the United States. While the rattlesnake’s bite can be fatal, they are not necessarily as dangerous as some people believe. Rattlesnakes don’t usually bite unless they are provoked or they feel like they are in danger. If left untreated, their bite can result in death, but if the victim receives prompt medical treatment, a full recovery is likely. Unfortunately, rattlesnake bites do result in a number of deaths of pets in areas that have a lot of rattlesnakes.

1. What is the central idea of today’s passage?
   a. Rattlesnakes kill a lot of people every year.
   b. A rattlesnake bite can be lethal, but is treatable.
   c. Rattlesnakes are popular in movies.

2. What inference can be made about pets that get bit by rattlesnakes?
   a. They likely did not receive treatment in time.
   b. The rattlesnake may have felt threatened by the animal.
   c. Both a & b.

3. Write a quote from the passage that supports your answer to #2.
Day 5

Cheerleading is a great activity for young men and women. It has risen in popularity in recent years and is a good way to show off a variety of skills. Cheerleaders must be precise, energetic and able to motivate crowds. There are two main types of cheerleading: sideline and competitive. Sideline cheerleaders are the cheerleaders you see cheering on the sidelines at football or basketball games. They shout out cheers and do some basic jumps and tumbling. Competitive cheerleading allows cheerleading squads to compete against each other. They participate in routines where they can show off their precision, flexibility, stunting and tumbling. Cheerleading programs can start as young as age 2 and go up through the college level. Both males and females can be cheerleaders. Male cheerleaders are often used as spotters when stunting because of their strength. Cheerleading can be a private sport or club that is not affiliated with any schools, or it can be a school sport. In order to become a cheerleader, the athlete must try out and demonstrate their skill set before a group of judges. Only the most skilled are chosen to become a cheerleader.

1. What is a central idea of today’s passage?
   a. Cheerleading is a wonderful way for kids to stay active.
   b. There are two main types of cheerleading and both require skill and hard work.
   c. Cheerleading at football and basketball games is very popular.

2. What inference about trying out to be a cheerleader can be made from the passage?
   a. It is usually very easy to become a cheerleader on a team or squad.
   b. There usually isn’t a lot of interest in becoming a cheerleader.
   c. It is a very competitive process.

3. What inference can be made about stunting?
   a. Cheerleaders have to be very strong in order to participate in stunting.
   b. Stunting is not necessary during cheerleading competitions.
   c. The majority of cheerleaders do not participate in stunts.

4. Write a summary of today’s passage.
GUIDE FOR READING

Cat on the Go

James Herriot (1916— ) was born James Alfred Wight in Scotland. However, he uses the name Herriot when writing about his experiences as a veterinarian in Yorkshire, an English county. Herriot's books are famous for their lively descriptions of the characters he met, both animal and human. "Cat on the Go," which comes from his book All Things Wise and Wonderful, describes a cat that loves to go visiting.

An essay is a kind of musing, or thinking, upon a subject. It takes the form of a brief and personal discussion of any topic that a writer wants to consider. A narrative essay explores the subject by telling a true story. This type of essay may remind you of an autobiographical sketch. In an autobiography, however, the writer is always the central character, while a narrative essay may focus on a character other than the writer. The narrative essay "Cat on the Go," for instance, centers on the actions of Oscar, a friendly and restless cat.

As you read, pay close attention to the cat's personality. Look for how his personality gives you clues to the secret of his disappearances.

Oscar is a most unusual cat. Write about an animal you have known that stood out from others of its kind. What made this animal special?

Knowing the following words will help you as you read "Cat on the Go."

- **grotesquely** (grō tesk' lē) adv.: In a strange or distorted way (p. 351)
- **emaciated** (i mà' shē āt' ad) adj.: Extremely thin; starving (p. 351)
- **sieve** (siv) n.: Utensil with many tiny openings; strainer (p. 353)
- **inevitable** (in ev' a to b'l) adj.: Certain to happen (p. 353)
- **sauntered** (sön' tərd) v.: Strolled (p. 354)
- **distraught** (dis trōt') adj.: Extremely upset (p. 355)
- **despondent** (di spän' dənt) adj.: Lacking hope; depressed (p. 355)
- **intrigued** (in trēgd') v.: Fascinated (p. 356)
- **consolation** (kän' so lä' shən) n.: Comfort (p. 359)
- **surreptitiously** (sur' ap tish' as lē) adv.: Secretly (p. 360)
Cat on the Go

James Herriot

One winter evening Tristan shouted up the stairs from the passage far below.

"Jim! Jim!"

I went out and stuck my head over the bannisters. "What is it, Triss?"

"Sorry to bother you, Jim, but could you come down for a minute?" The upturned face had an anxious look.

I went down the long flights of steps two at a time and when I arrived slightly breathless on the ground floor Tristan beckoned me through to the consulting room at the back of the house. A teenage girl was standing by the table, her head resting on a stained roll of blanket.

"It’s a cat," Tristan said. He pulled back a fold of the blanket and I looked down at a large, deeply striped tabby. At least he would have been large if he had had any flesh on his bones, but ribs and pelvis stood out painfully through the fur and as I passed my hand over the motionless body I could feel only a thin covering of skin.

Tristan cleared his throat. "There’s something else, Jim."

I looked at him curiously. For once he didn’t seem to have a joke in him. I watched as he gently lifted one of the cat’s hind legs and rolled the abdomen into view. There was a gash on the ventral surface through which a coiled cluster of intestines spilled grotesquely onto the cloth. I was still shocked and staring when the girl spoke.

"I saw this cat sittin’ in the dark, down Brown’s yard. I thought ‘e looked skinny, like, and a bit quiet and I bent down to give ‘im a pat. Then I saw ‘e was badly hurt and I went home for a blanket and brought ‘im round to you."

"That was kind of you," I said. "Have you any idea who he belongs to?"

The girl shook her head. "No, he looks like a stray to me."

"He does indeed." I dragged my eyes away from the terrible wound. "You’re Marjorie Simpson, aren’t you?"

"Yes."

"I know your Dad well. He’s our postman."

"That’s right." She gave a half smile then her lips trembled.

"Well, I reckon I’d better leave ‘im with you. You’ll be going to put him out of his misery. There’s nothing anybody can do about... about that?"

I shrugged and shook my head. The girl’s eyes filled with tears, she stretched out a hand and touched the emaciated animal then turned and walked quickly to the door.

"Thanks again, Marjorie," I called after the retreating back. "And don’t worry—we’ll look after him."

In the silence that followed, Tristan and I looked down at the shattered animal. Under the surgery lamp it was all too easy to...
see. He had almost been disemboweled\(^2\) and the pile of intestines was covered in dirt and mud.

"What d'you think did this?" Tristan said at length, "Has he been run over?"

"Maybe," I replied. "Could be anything. An attack by a big dog or somebody could have kicked him or struck him." All things were possible with cats because some people seemed to regard them as fair game for any cruelty.

Tristan nodded. "Anyway, whatever happened, he must have been on the verge of starvation. He's a skeleton. I bet he's wandered miles from home."

"Ah well," I sighed. "There's only one thing to do. Those guts are perforated in several places. It's hopeless."

---

3. disemboweled (dis' im bou' ald) v.: Lost its intestines.

Tristan didn't say anything but he whistled under his breath and drew the tip of his forefinger again and again across the furry cheek. And, unbelievably, from somewhere in the scraggy chest a gentle purring arose.

The young man looked at me, round eyed. "My God, do you hear that?"

"Yes . . . amazing in that condition. He's a good-natured cat."

Tristan, head bowed, continued his stroking. I knew how he felt because, although he preserved a cheerfully hard-boiled attitude to our patients he couldn't kid me about one thing; he had a soft spot for cats. Even now, when we are both around the sixty mark, he often talks to me about the cat he has had for many years. It is a typical relationship—they tease each other unmercifully—but it is based on real affection.

"It's no good, Triss," I said gently. "It's got to be done." I reached for the syringe but
something in me rebelled against plunging a
needle into that mutilated body. Instead I
pulled a fold of the blanket over the cat's
head.

"Pour a little ether onto the cloth," I said.
"He'll just sleep away."

Wordlessly, Tristan unscrewed the cap of
the ether bottle and poised it above the head.
Then from under the shapeless heap of blank-
et we heard it again; the deep purring
which increased in volume till it boomed in
our ears like a distant motorcycle.

Tristan was like a man turned to stone,
hand gripping the bottle rigidly, eyes staring
down at the mound of cloth from which the
purring rose in waves of warm friendly
sound.

At last he looked up at me and gulped. "I
don't fancy this much, Jim. Can't we do
something?"

"You mean, put that lot back?"

"Yes."

"But the bowels are damaged—they're
like a sieve in parts."

"We could stitch them, couldn't we?"

I lifted the blanket and looked again.
"Honestly, Triss, I wouldn't know where to
start. And the whole thing is filthy."

He didn't say anything, but continued to
look at me steadily. And I didn't need much
persuading. I had no more desire to pour
ether onto that comradely purring than he
had.

"Come on, then," I said. "We'll have a
go."

With the oxygen bubbling and the cat's
head in the anesthetic mask we washed the
whole prolapse with warm saline. We did it
again and again but it was impossible to re-
move every fragment of caked dirt. Then we
started the painfully slow business of stitch-
ing the many holes in the tiny intestines,

and here I was glad of Tristan's nimble fin-
gers which seemed better able to manipulate
the small round-bodied needles than mine.

Two hours and yards of catgut later, we
dusted the patched up peritoneal surface
with sulfanilamide and pushed the entire
mass back into the abdomen. When I had
sutured muscle layers and skin everything
looked tidy but I had a nasty feeling of
sweeping undesirable things under the car-
pet. The extensive damage, all that contami-
nation—peritonitis was inevitable.

"He's alive, anyway, Triss," I said as we
began to wash the instruments. "We'll put
him onto sulfa-pyridine and keep our fingers
crossed." There were still no antibiotics at
that time but the new drug was a big ad-

The door opened and Helen came in.
"You've been a long time, Jim." She walked
over to the table and looked down at the
sleeping cat. "What a poor skinny little
thing. He's all bones."

"You should have seen him when he
came in." Tristan switched off the sterilizer
and screwed shut the valve on the anesthetic
machine. "He looks a lot better now."

She stroked the little animal for a mo-
ment. "Is he badly injured?"

"I'm afraid so, Helen," I said. "We've done
our best for him but I honestly don't think
he has much chance."

"What a shame. And he's pretty, too.
Four white feet and all those unusual col-
ors." With her finger she traced the faint
bands of auburn and copper-gold among
the gray and black.

---

3. prolapse (prō’ laps) n.: An internal organ—here, the intestines—that has fallen out of place.
4. saline (sā’ lin) n.: A salt solution.
5. catgut (kat’ gut’) n.: A tough string or thread used in surgery.
6. peritoneal (per’ it’ n e’ al) adj.: Having to do with the membrane that lines the abdomen.
7. sulfanilamide (sulf’ n il’ ā mīd) n.: Sulfur drugs were used to treat infections before penicillin was discovered and other antibiotics were created.
8. peritonitis (per’ it’ n it’ ı tıs) n.: Inflammation of the abdominal lining.
Tristan laughed. "Yes, I think that chap has a ginger Tom somewhere in his ancestry."

Helen smiled, too, but absently, and I noticed a broody look about her. She hurried out to the stock room and returned with an empty box.

"Yes . . . yes . . ." she said thoughtfully. "I can make a bed in this box for him and he'll sleep in our room, Jim."

"He will?"

"Yes, he must be warm, mustn't he?"

"Of course."

Later, in the darkness of our bed-sitter, I looked from my pillow at a cozy scene. Sam in his basket on one side of the flickering fire and the cat cushioned and blanketed in his box on the other.

As I floated off into sleep it was good to know that my patient was so comfortable, but I wondered if he would be alive in the morning . . .

I knew he was alive at 7:30 a.m. because my wife was already up and talking to him. I trailld across the room in my pajamas and the cat and I looked at each other. I rubbed him under the chin and he opened his mouth in a rusty miaow. But he didn't try to move.

"Helen," I said. "This little thing is tied together inside with catgut. He'll have to live on fluids for a week and even then he probably won't make it. If he stays up here you'll be spooning milk into him umpteen times a day."

"Okay, okay." She had that broody look again.

It wasn't only milk she spooned into him over the next few days. Beef essence, strained broth and a succession of sophisticated baby foods found their way down his throat at regular intervals. One lunch time I found Helen kneeling by the box.

"We shall call him Oscar," she said.

"You mean we're keeping him?"

"Yes."

I am fond of cats but we already had a dog in our cramped quarters and I could see difficulties. Still I decided to let it go.

"Why Oscar?"

"I don't know." Helen tipped a few drops of chop gravy onto the little red tongue and watched intently as he swallowed.

One of the things I like about women is their mystery, the unfathomable part of them, and I didn't press the matter further. But I was pleased at the way things were going. I had been giving the sulfapyridine every six hours and taking the temperature night and morning, expecting all the time to encounter the roaring fever, the vomiting and the tense abdomen of peritonitis. But it never happened.

It was as though Oscar's animal instincts told him he had to move as little as possible because he lay absolutely still day after day and looked up at us—and purred.

His purr became part of our lives and when he eventually left his bed, sauntered through to our kitchen and began to sample Sam's dinner of meat and biscuit it was a moment of triumph. And I didn't spoil it by wondering if he was ready for solid food; I felt he knew.

From then on it was sheer joy to watch the furry scarecrow fill out and grow strong, and as he ate and ate and the flesh spread over his bones the true beauty of his coat showed in the glossy medley of auburn, black and gold. We had a handsome cat on our hands.

Once Oscar had fully recovered, Tristan was a regular visitor.

He probably felt, and rightly, that he, more than I, had saved Oscar's life in the
first place and he used to play with him for long periods. His favorite ploy was to push his leg round the corner of the table and withdraw it repeatedly just as the cat pawed at it.

Oscar was justifiably irritated by this teasing but showed his character by lying in wait for Tristan one night and biting him smartly\(^{10}\) in the ankle before he could start his tricks.

From my own point of view Oscar added many things to our menage.\(^{11}\) Sam was delighted with him and the two soon became firm friends. Helen adored him and each evening I thought afresh that a nice cat washing his face by the hearth gave extra comfort to a room.

Oscar had been established as one of the family for several weeks when I came in from a late call to find Helen waiting for me with a stricken face.

“What’s happened?” I asked.

“It’s Oscar—he’s gone!”

“Gone? What do you mean?”

“Oh, Jim, I think he’s run away.”

I stared at her. “He wouldn’t do that. He often goes down to the garden at night. Are you sure he isn’t there?”

“Absolutely. I’ve searched right into the yard. I’ve even had a walk round the town. And remember.” Her chin quivered. “He... he ran away from somewhere before.”

I looked at my watch. “Ten o’clock. Yes, that is strange. He shouldn’t be out at this time.”

As I spoke the front door bell jangled. I galloped down the stairs and as I rounded the corner in the passage I could see Mrs. Heslington, the vicar’s\(^{12}\) wife, through the glass. I threw open the door. She was holding Oscar in her arms.

“I believe this is your cat, Mr. Herriot,” she said.

“It is indeed, Mrs. Heslington. Where did you find him?”

She smiled. “Well it was rather odd. We were having a meeting of the Mothers’ Union at the church house and we noticed the cat sitting there in the room.”

“Just sitting...?”

“Yes, as though he were listening to what we were saying and enjoying it all. It was unusual. When the meeting ended I thought I’d better bring him along to you.”

“I’m most grateful, Mrs. Heslington.” I snatched Oscar and tucked him under my arm. “My wife is distraught—she thought he was lost.”

It was a little mystery. Why should he suddenly take off like that? But since he showed no change in his manner over the ensuing week we put it out of our minds.

Then one evening a man brought in a dog for a distemper\(^{13}\) inoculation and left the front door open. When I went up to our flat I found that Oscar had disappeared again. This time Helen and I scouried the marketplace and side alleys in vain and when we returned at half past nine we were both despondent. It was nearly eleven and we were thinking of bed when the doorbell rang.

It was Oscar again, this time resting on the ample stomach of Jack Newbould. Jack was a gardener at one of the big houses. He hiccuped gently and gave me a huge benevolent smile. “Brought your cat, Mr. Herriot.”

“Gosh, thanks, Jack!” I said, scooping up Oscar gratefully. “Where the devil did you find him?”

“Well, s’matter o’ fact ’e sort of found me.”

“What do you mean?”

---

10. **smartly** (smärt’ lē) adv.: Sharply.
11. **menage** (ma näzh’ə) n.: Household.
12. **vicar’s** (vik’ arz) n.: A vicar is a parish priest.
13. **distemper** (dis tem’ par) n.: An infectious virus disease of young dogs.
Jack closed his eyes for a few moments before articulating carefully. "Thish is a big night, tha knows, Mr. Herriot. Darts championship. Lots of 'lads round at 'Dog and Gun—lots and lots of 'em. Big gatherin'."

"And our cat was there?"

"Aye, he were there, all right. Sitting among 'lads. Shpent t'whole evenin' with us."

"Just sat there, eh?"

"That 'e did." Jack giggled reminiscently. "By gaw 'e enjoyed 'isself. Ah gave 'em a drop out of me own glass and once or twice ah thought 'e was going to have a go at chuckin' a dart. He's some cat." He laughed again.

As I bore Oscar upstairs I was deep in thought. What was going on here? These sudden desertions were upsetting Helen and I felt they could get on my nerves in time.

I didn't have long to wait till the next one. Three nights later he was missing again. This time Helen and I didn't bother to search—we just waited.

He was back earlier than usual. I heard the door bell at nine o'clock. It was the elderly Miss Simpson peering through the glass. And she wasn't holding Oscar—he was prowling on the mat waiting to come in.

Miss Simpson watched with interest as the cat stalked inside and made for the stairs. "Ah, good, I'm so glad he's come home safely. I knew he was your cat and I've been intrigued by his behavior all evening."

"Where... may I ask?"

"Oh, at the Women's Institute. He came in shortly after we started and stayed there till the end."

"Really? What exactly was your program, Miss Simpson?"

"Well, there was a bit of committee stuff, then a short talk with lantern slides by Mr. Walters from the water company and we finished with a cake-making competition."

"Yes... yes... and what did Oscar do?"

She laughed. "Mixed with the company, apparently enjoyed the slides and showed great interest in the cakes."

"I see. And you didn't bring him home?"

"No, he made his own way here. As you know, I have to pass your house and I merely rang your bell to make sure you knew he had arrived."

"I'm obliged to you, Miss Simpson. We were a little worried."

I mounted the stairs in record time. Helen was sitting with the cat on her knee and she looked up as I burst in.

"I know about Oscar now," I said.

"Know what?"

"Why he goes on these nightly outings. He's not running away—he's visiting."

"Visiting?"

"Yes," I said. "Don't you see? He likes getting around, he loves people, especially in groups, and he's interested in what they do. He's a natural mixer."

Helen looked down at the attractive mound of fur curled on her lap. "Of course... that's it... he's a socialite!"

"Exactly, a high stepper!"

"A cat-about-town!"

It all afforded us some innocent laughter and Oscar sat up and looked at us with evident pleasure, adding his own throbbing purr to the merriment. But for Helen and me there was a lot of relief behind it; ever since our cat had started his excursions there had been the gnawing fear that we would lose him, and now we felt secure.

From that night our delight in him increased. There was endless joy in watching this facet of his character unfolding. He did the social round meticulously, taking in most of the activities of the town. He became a familiar figure at whist drives,14 jumble

---

14. whist (hwist) drives: Attempts to raise money for charities and other purposes by playing the card game whist.
sales.\footnote{15} school concerts and scout bazaars. Most of the time he was made welcome, but was twice ejected from meetings of the Rural District Council who did not seem to relish the idea of a cat sitting in on their deliberations.

At first I was apprehensive about his making his way through the streets but I watched him once or twice and saw that he looked both ways before tripping daintily across. Clearly he had excellent traffic sense and this made me feel that his original injury had not been caused by a car.

Taking it all in all, Helen and I felt that it was a kind stroke of fortune which had brought Oscar to us. He was a warm and cherished part of our home life. He added to our happiness.

When the blow fell it was totally unexpected.

I was finishing the evening surgery.\footnote{16} I looked round the door and saw only a man and two little boys.

"Next, please," I said.

The man stood up. He had no animal with him. He was middle-aged, with the rough weathered face of a farm worker. He twirled a cloth cap nervously in his hands.

"Mr. Herriot?" he said.
"Yes, what can I do for you?"
He swallowed and looked me straight in
the eyes. "Ah think you’ve got ma cat."
"What?"
"Ah lost ma cat a bit since." He cleared
his throat. "We used to live at Missdon but
ah got a job as plowman to Mr. Horne of
Wederly. It was after we moved to Wederly
that t’cat went missin’. Ah reckon he was
tryin’ to find ‘is way back to his old home."
"Wederly? That’s on the other side of
Brawton—over thirty miles away."
"Aye, ah knaw, but cats is funny things."
"But what makes you think I’ve got
him?"
He twisted the cap around a bit more.
"There’s a cousin o’ mine lives in Darrowby
and ah heard tell from ‘im about this cat
that goes around to meetin’s. I ‘ad to come.
We’ve been huntin’ everywhere."
"Tell me," I said. "This cat you lost. What
did he look like?"
"Gray and black and sort o’ gingery. 
Right bonny! e was. And e was allus goin’
out to gatherin’s."
A cold hand clutched at my heart. "You’d
better come up stairs. Bring the boys with
you."
Helen was putting some coal on the fire
of the bed-sitter.
"Helen," I said. "This is Mr.—er—I’m
sorry, I don’t know your name."
"Gibbons. Sep Gibbons. They called me
Septimus because ah was the seventh in
family and it looks like ah’m goin’ ‘same way
‘cause we’ve got six already. These are our
two youngest." The two boys, obvious twins
of about eight, looked up at us solemnly.
I wished my heart would stop hammering. "Mr. Gibbons thinks Oscar is his. He
lost his cat some time ago."
My wife put down her little shovel. "Oh
... oh ... I see." She stood very still for a
moment then smiled faintly. "Do sit down.
Oscar’s in the kitchen. I’ll bring him
through."
She went out and reappeared with the
cat in her arms. She hadn’t got through the
door before the little boys gave tongue.
"Tiger!” they cried. "Oh, Tiger. Tiger!"
The man’s face seemed lit from within.
He walked quickly across the floor and ran
his big work-roughened hand along the fur.
"Hullo, awd lad," he said, and turned to
me with a radiant smile. "It’s ‘im, Mr. Her-
riot. It’s ‘im awright, and don’t ‘e look well!"
"You call him Tiger, eh?" I said.
"Aye," he replied happily. "It’s them ging-
ery stripes. The kids called ‘im that. They
were brokenhearted when we lost ‘im."
As the two little boys rolled on the floor
our Oscar rolled with them, pawing playfully,
purring with delight.
Sep Gibbons sat down again. "That’s the
way ‘e allus went on wi’ the family. They
used to play with ‘im for hours. By gaw we
did miss ‘im. He were a right favorite."
I looked at the broken nails on the edge
of the cap, at the decent, honest, uncomplic-
ated Yorkshire face so like the many I had
grown to like and respect. Farm men like
him got thirty shillings a week in those days
and it was reflected in the threadbare jacket,
the cracked, shiny boots and the obvious
hand-me-downs of the boys.
But all three were scrubbed and tidy, the
man’s face like a red beacon, the children’s
knees gleaming and their hair carefully
slied across their foreheads. They looked
like nice people to me. I didn’t know what to
say.
Helen said it for me. "Well, Mr. Gibbons."
Her tone had an unnatural brightness.
"You’d better take him."

17. Bonny (bān’ ē) adj.: Pretty.
18. Yorkshire: A former county of northern
England.
The man hesitated. "Now then, are ye sure, Missis Herriot?"

"Yes . . . yes, I'm sure. He was your cat first."

"Aye, but some folks 'ud say finders keepers or summat like that. Ah didn't come 'ere to demand 'im back or owt of t'sort."

"I know you didn't, Mr. Gibbons, but you've had him all those years and you've searched for him so hard. We couldn't possibly keep him from you."

He nodded quickly. "Well, that's right good of ye." He paused for a moment, his face serious, then he stooped and picked Oscar up. "We'll have to be off if we're goin' to catch the eight o'clock bus."

Helen reached forward, cupped the cat's head in her hands and looked at him steadily for a few seconds. Then she patted the boys' heads. "You'll take good care of him, won't you?"

"Aye, missis, thank ye, we will that." The two small faces looked up at her and smiled.

"I'll see you down the stairs, Mr. Gibbons," I said.

On the descent I tickled the furry cheek resting on the man's shoulder and heard for the last time the rich purring. On the front door step we shook hands and they set off down the street. As they rounded the corner of Trengate they stopped and waved, and I waved back at the man, the two children and the cat's head looking back at me over the shoulder.

It was my habit at that time in my life to mount the stairs two or three at a time but on this occasion I trudged upwards like an old man, slightly breathless, throat tight, eyes prickling.

I cursed myself for a sentimental fool but as I reached our door I found a flash of consolation. Helen had taken it remarkably well. She had nursed that cat and grown deeply attached to him, and I'd have thought an unforeseen calamity like this would have up-set her terribly. But no, she had behaved calmly and rationally.

It was up to me to do as well. I adjusted my features into the semblance of a cheerful smile and marched into the room.

Helen had pulled a chair close to the table and was slumped face down against the wood. One arm cradled her head while the other was stretched in front of her as her body shook with an utterly abandoned weeping.

I had never seen her like this and I was appalled. I tried to say something comforting but nothing stemmed the flow of racking sobs.

Feeling helpless and inadequate I could only sit close to her and stroke the back of her head. Maybe I could have said something if I hadn't felt just about as bad myself.

You get over these things in time. After all, we told ourselves, it wasn't as though Oscar had died or got lost again—he had gone to a good family who would look after him. In fact he had really gone home.

And of course, we still had our much-loved Sam, although he didn't help in the early stages by sniffling disconsolately where Oscar's bed used to lie then collapsing on the rug with a long lugubrious sigh.

There was one other thing, too. I had a little notion forming in my mind, an idea which I would spring on Helen when the time was right. It was about a month after that shattering night and we were coming out of the cinema at Brawton at the end of our half day. I looked at my watch.

"Only eight o'clock," I said. "How about going to see Oscar?"

Helen looked at me in surprise. "You mean—drive on to Wederly?"

"Yes, it's only about five miles."

A smile crept slowly across her face. "That would be lovely. But do you think they would mind?"

Cat on the Go 359
"The Gibbons? No, I'm sure they wouldn't. Let's go."

Wederly was a big village and the plowman's cottage was at the far end a few yards beyond the Methodist chapel. I pushed open the garden gate and we walked down the path.

A busy-looking little woman answered my knock. She was drying her hands on a striped towel.

"Mrs. Gibbons?" I said.

"Aye, that's me."

"I'm James Herriot—and this is my wife."

Her eyes widened comprehendingly. Clearly the name meant nothing to her.

"We had your cat for a while," I added.

Suddenly she grinned and waved her towel at us. "Oh aye, ah remember now. Sep told me about you. Come in, come in!"

The big kitchen-living room was a tableau of life with six children and thirty shillings a week. Battered furniture, rows of much-mended washing on a pulley, black cooking range and a general air of chaos.

Sep got up from his place by the fire, put down his newspaper, took off a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles and shook hands.

He waved Helen to a sagging armchair. "Well, it's right nice to see you. Ah've often spoke of ye to t'missis."

His wife hung up her towel. "Yes, and I'm glad to meet ye both. I'll get some tea in a minnit."

She laughed and dragged a bucket of muddy water into a corner. "I've been washin' football jerseys. Them lads just handed them to me tonight—as if I haven't enough to do."

As she ran the water into the kettle I peeped surreptitiously around me and I noticed Helen doing the same. But we searched in vain. There was no sign of a cat. Surely he couldn't have run away again? With a growing feeling of dismay I realized that my little scheme could backfire devastatingly.

It wasn't until the tea had been made and poured that I dared to raise the subject.

"How—" I asked diffidently. "How is—er—Tiger?"

"Oh, he's grand," the little woman replied briskly. She glanced up at the clock on the mantelpiece. "He should be back any time now, then you'll be able to see 'im."

As she spoke, Sep raised a finger. "Ah think ah can hear 'im now."

He walked over and opened the door and our Oscar strode in with all his old grace and majesty. He took one look at Helen and leaped onto her lap. With a cry of delight she put down her cup and stroked the beautiful fur as the cat arched himself against her hand and the familiar purr echoed round the room.

"He knows me," she murmured. "He knows me."

Sep nodded and smiled. "He does that. You were good to 'im. He'll never forget ye, and we won't either, will we mother?"

"No, we won't, Mrs. Herriot," his wife said as she applied butter to a slice of gingerbread. "That was a kind thing ye did for us and I 'ope you'll come and see us all whenever you're near."

"Well, thank you," I said. "We'd love to—we're often in Brawton."

I went over and tickled Oscar's chin, then I turned again to Mrs. Gibbons. "By the way, it's after nine o'clock. Where has he been till now?"

She poised her butter knife and looked into space.

"Let's see, now," she said. "It's Thursday, isn't it? Ah yes, it's 'is night for the Yoga class."
THINKING ABOUT THE SELECTION

Recalling
1. What happens to the cat during one of its trips from the Gibbonses’ home?
2. Explain how Herriot and his wife help the cat.
3. Where does the cat go each time it wanders off from the Herriots’ apartment?
4. What do Herriot and his wife discover about the cat that makes them laugh?
5. Explain how the cat is reunited with his first owners.

Interpreting
6. What is the effect of the injured cat’s purring on Herriot and Tristan?
7. Why does Helen decide to give the cat up rather than claim “finders keepers”?
8. What qualities make this cat special?

Applying
9. Why do you think that many people enjoy having pets?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

Understanding the Narrative Essay

An essay is a brief and personal discussion of any topic that a writer wants to consider. A narrative essay considers the topic by telling a true story. In “Cat on the Go,” Herriot gives a strong personal flavor to his narrative by telling you his thoughts and feelings. He writes about the healing cat, for example, “... it was sheer joy to watch the furry scarecrow fill out....”

1. What is the topic of this narrative essay? What is Herriot’s attitude toward the topic?
2. Identify three passages where Herriot tells you his thoughts or feelings about the topic.
3. How does Herriot’s enjoyment of the cat increase your interest in the essay?

CRITICAL THINKING AND READING

Considering Another Perspective

This story is told from the point of view of James Herriot. That is why the sequence of events begins when Herriot first hears about the injured cat from Tristan. If the story had been told by Septimus Gibbons, however, it would have had a different shape.

1. How might the story have begun if Mr. Gibbons were telling it?
2. Which events in Herriot’s story might not have been included in Gibbons’ story?
3. Would Gibbons’ story have ended in the same way? Why?

UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE

Recognizing British English

Although the English language is used in Great Britain and America, it is not exactly the same in both countries. For example, James Herriot, a British writer, refers to “jumble sales.” Americans, however, would use the phrase rummage sales to describe “sales of contributed articles to raise money for charity.” Other British terms that appear in the story are bed-sitter and surgery (see footnotes 9 and 16).

Look up the following British terms in a dictionary—the abbreviation Brit. usually appears next to the British meaning—and use each in a sentence.

1. petrol
2. sorry
3. bonnet

THINKING AND WRITING

Creating a Television Program

This essay has actually been made into a television program. Pretend that you were the writer hired to create this show. The producer has told you, however, that there is not enough time to include every episode. List the episodes that you think must appear in the program. Then write a memo to the producer defending your list. When you revise the memo, make sure it is convincing.

Cat on the Go   361
The Night the Bed Fell

James Thurber (1894–1961) lost the vision in one eye due to a childhood accident; however, he did not allow this disability to slow him down. He worked as a newspaper reporter and later wrote humorous pieces for The New Yorker, a famous magazine. In addition to being a talented writer, Thurber was a cartoonist. His amusing line drawings often accompany his writing. "The Night the Bed Fell," like many of his essays, describes the funny goings-on in his family.

A humorous essay is a brief work of nonfiction that is meant to amuse you. Many of James Thurber's humorous essays, like "The Night the Bed Fell," are about his lovable but silly relatives. During the night that Thurber tells about in this essay, each family member, including Thurber himself, has a different and mistaken idea of what is going on. The result is total confusion for the characters and a great deal of fun for the reader.

As you read, look for Thurber's descriptions of the "crotchets," or peculiar ideas, of his relatives. Be aware of how Briggs's unusual notions, in particular, add to the confusion of the night's events. Think about how all these peculiarities work together to make you laugh.

Thurber tells how a simple event snowballs into an outrageous episode. Recall a time when you took part in an event with an amusing outcome. Describe the people who were involved, and make a list of the main things that happened. Make sure your description shows what made the event humorous.

Knowing the following words will help you as you read "The Night the Bed Fell."

ominous (əˈmənas) adj.: Threatening (p. 363)
allay (əˈlā) v.: Put to rest; calm (p. 363)
fortitude (fərˈtaʊdət) n.: Firm courage (p. 364)
perilous (pəˈrāləs) adj.: Dangerous (p. 364)
deluge (dəˈlədʒ) n.: A great flood or rush of anything (p. 365)
pungent (pənˈdʒēnt) adj.: Sharp-smelling (p. 365)
extricate (ekˈstraktət) v.: Set free; disentangle (p. 365)
culprit (kulˈprilt) n.: Guilty person (p. 366)
The Night the Bed Fell
James Thurber

I suppose that the high-water mark of my youth in Columbus, Ohio, was the night the bed fell on my father. It makes a better recitation (unless, as some friends of mine have said, one has heard it five or six times) than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale. Still, it did take place.

It happened, then, that my father had decided to sleep in the attic one night, to be away where he could think. My mother opposed the notion strongly because, she said, the old wooden bed up there was unsafe: it was wobbly and the heavy headboard would crash down on father’s head in case the bed fell, and kill him. There was no dissuading him, however, and at a quarter past ten he closed the attic door behind him and went up the narrow twisting stairs. We later heard ominous creakings as he crawled into bed. Grandfather, who usually slept in the attic bed when he was with us, had disappeared some days before. On these occasions he was usually gone six or eight days and returned growling and out of temper, with the news that the Federal Union was run by a passel of blockheads and that the Army of the Potomac didn’t have a chance.

1. verisimilitude (ver’ ə si mil’də tōd’də) n.: The appearance of being true or real.
2. Federal Union: The Northern side during the Civil War. He is under the illusion that the Civil War has not yet ended.
3. Army of the Potomac: One of the Northern armies during the Civil War.

We had visiting us at this time a nervous first cousin of mine named Briggs Beall, who believed that he was likely to cease breathing when he was asleep. It was his feeling that if he were not awakened every hour during the night, he might die of suffocation. He had been accustomed to setting an alarm clock to ring at intervals until morning, but I persuaded him to abandon this. He slept in my room and I told him that I was such a light sleeper that if anybody quit breathing in the same room with me, I would wake instantly. He tested me the first night—which I had suspected he would—by holding his breath after my regular breathing had convinced him I was asleep. I was not asleep, however, and called to him. This seemed to allay his fears a little, but he took the precaution of putting a glass of spirits of camphor on a little table at the head of his bed. In case I didn’t arouse him until he was almost gone, he said, he would sniff the camphor, a powerful reviver. Briggs was not the only member of his family who had his crotchets. Old Aunt Melissa Beall (who could whistle like a man, with two fingers in her mouth) suffered under the premonition that she was destined to die on South High Street, because she had been born on South High Street and married on South High Street. Then there was Aunt Sarah Shoaf, who never went to bed at night without the

4. spirits of camphor: A liquid with a powerful odor.
5. crotchets (kräch’ itz) n.: Peculiar or stubborn ideas.

The Night the Bed Fell
fear that a burglar was going to get in and blow chloroform under her door through a tube. To avert this calamity—for she was in greater dread of anesthetics than of losing her household goods—she always piled her money, silverware, and other valuables in a neat stack just outside her bedroom, with a note reading: "This is all I have. Please take it and do not use your chloroform, as this is all I have." Aunt Gracie Shoaf also had a burglar phobia, but she met it with more fortitude. She was confident that burglars had been getting into her house every night for forty years. The fact that she never missed

6. chloroform (klörˈə fôrm) n.: A substance used at one time as an anesthetic, or pain-killer, during operations because it can cause a person to pass out.

7. disposition (diˈ pozhən) n.: Arrangement.

any thing was to her no proof to the contrary. She always claimed that she scared them off before they could take anything, by throwing shoes down the hallway. When she went to bed she piled, where she could get at them readily, all the shoes there were about her house. Five minutes after she had turned off the light, she would sit up in bed and say "Hark!" Her husband, who had learned to ignore the whole situation as long ago as 1903, would either be sound asleep or pretend to be sound asleep. In either case he would not respond to her tugging and pulling, so that presently she would arise, tiptoe to the door, open it slightly and heave a shoe down the hall in one direction, and its mate down the hall in the other direction. Some nights she threw them all, some nights only a couple of pair.

But I am straying from the remarkable incidents that took place during the night that the bed fell on father. By midnight we were all in bed. The layout of the rooms and the disposition of their occupants is important to an understanding of what later occurred. In the front room upstairs (just under father's attic bedroom) were my mother and my brother Herman, who sometimes sang in his sleep, usually "Marching Through Georgia" or "Onward, Christian Soldiers." Briggs Beall and myself were in a room adjoining this one. My brother Roy was in a room across the hall from ours. Our bull terrier, Rex, slept in the hall.

My bed was an army cot, one of those affairs which are made wide enough to sleep on comfortably only by putting up, flat with the middle section, the two sides which ordinarily hang down like the sideboards of a drop-leaf table. When these sides are up, it is perilous to roll too far toward the edge, for
then the cot is likely to tip completely over, bringing the whole bed down on top of one, with a tremendous banging crash. This, in fact, is precisely what happened about two o'clock in the morning. (It was my mother who, in recalling the scene later, first referred to it as "the night the bed fell on your father")

Always a deep sleeper, slow to arouse (I had lied to Briggs), I was at first unconscious of what had happened when the iron cot rolled me onto the floor and toppled over on me. It left me still warmly bundled up and unhurt, for the bed rested above me like a canopy. Hence I did not wake up, only reached the edge of consciousness and went back. The racket, however, instantly awakened my mother, in the next room, who came to the immediate conclusion that her worst dread was realized: the big wooden bed upstairs had fallen on father. She therefore screamed, "Let's go to your poor father!" It was this shout, rather than the noise of my cot falling, that awakened Herman, in the same room with her. He thought my mother had become, for no apparent reason, hysterical. "You're all right, Mamma!" he shouted, trying to calm her. They exchanged shout for shout for perhaps ten seconds:

"Let's go to your poor father!" and "You're all right!" That woke up Briggs. By this time I was conscious of what was going on, in a vague way, but did not yet realize that I was under my bed instead of on it. Briggs, awakening in the midst of loud shouts of fear and apprehension, came to the quick conclusion that he was suffocating and that we were all trying to "bring him out." With a low moan, he grasped the glass of camphor at the head of his bed and instead of snuffing it poured it over himself. The room reeked of camphor.

"Ugf, ahfg," choked Briggs, like a drowning man, for he had almost succeeded in stopping his breath under the deluge of pungent spirits. He leaped out of bed and groped toward the open window, but he came up against one that was closed. With his hand, he beat out the glass, and I could hear it crash and tinkle on the alleyway below. It was at this juncture that I, in trying to get up, had the uncanny sensation of feeling my bed above me! Foggy with sleep, I now suspected, in my turn, that the whole uproar was being made in a frantic endeavor to extricate me from what must be an unheard-of and perilous situation. "Get
me out of this!"
I bawled. "Get me out!" I think I had the nightmarish belief that I was entombed in a mine. "Gugh," gasped Briggs, floundering in his camphor.

By this time my mother, still shouting, pursued by Herman, still shouting, was trying to open the door to the attic, in order to go up and get my father's body out of the wreckage. The door was stuck, however, and wouldn't yield. Her frantic pulls on it only added to the general banging and confusion. Roy and the dog were now up, the one shouting questions, the other barking.

Father, farthest away and soundest sleeper of all, had by this time been awakened by the battering on the attic door. He decided that the house was on fire. "I'm coming, I'm coming!" he wailed in a slow, sleepy voice—it took him many minutes to regain full consciousness. My mother, still believing he was caught under the bed, detected in his "I'm coming!" the mournful, resigned note of one who is preparing to meet his Maker. "He's dying!" she shouted.

"I'm all right!" Briggs yelled to reassure her. "I'm all right!" He still believed that it was his own closeness to death that was worrying mother. I found at last the light switch in my room, unlocked the door, and Briggs and I joined the others at the attic door. The dog, who never did like Briggs, jumped for him—assuming that he was the culprit in whatever was going on—and Roy had to throw Rex and hold him. We could hear father crawling out of bed upstairs. Roy pulled the attic door open, with a mighty jerk, and father came down the stairs, sleepy and irritable but safe and sound. My mother began to weep when she saw him. Rex began to howl. "What in the name of heaven is going on here?" asked father.

The situation was finally put together like a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. Father caught a cold from prowling around in his bare feet but there were no other bad results. "I'm glad," said mother, who always looked on the bright side of things, "that your grandfather wasn't here."
THINKING ABOUT THE SELECTION

Recalling
1. How does a difference of opinion between Thurber's parents set the stage for the events of the night?
2. What is Briggs's crotchet, or peculiar idea?
3. Describe the layout of the rooms and their placement or grouping. Why is their placement important to the plot of the story?
4. In chronological, or time, order, list the actions that occur after Thurber's cot collapses.

Interpreting
5. Why does Thurber introduce the essay with a description of some of his relatives?
6. Identify the moment at which the events reach their climax.
7. What evidence is there that Thurber felt affection for his family?

Applying
8. Would you like to have known the Thurber family? Why or why not?

ANALYZING LITERATURE
Understanding the Humorous Essay

A humorous essay is a brief work of nonfiction that is meant to amuse you. In "The Night the Bed Fell" much of the humor comes from the contrast between what is really happening and what the characters think is happening. For example, Thurber's mother believes that her husband lies crushed in the wreckage of his bed when he is really safely asleep.

1. Contrast what actual happens when the bed falls and what each character thinks is happening.
2. Would the essay be as funny if you were as confused about what happened as the characters are? Why?
3. At the beginning of the essay, Thurber writes, "It makes a better recitation . . . than it does a piece of writing, for it is almost necessary to throw furniture around, shake doors, and bark like a dog, to lend the proper atmosphere and verisimilitude to what is admittedly a somewhat incredible tale." Do you think such theatrics would make this funny tale even funnier? Why or why not?

CRITICAL THINKING AND READING
Identifying Exaggeration

Writers of humorous essays often exaggerate, or enlarge, their descriptions to make them funnier. In "The Night the Bed Fell," for example, Thurber says that Briggs poured a "deluge of pungent spirits" on himself. Of course, we know that Briggs did not really flood himself with camphor. The contrast between what is really happening and the exaggerated description is humorous.

In each of the following passages, point out what is exaggerated and explain the contrast between the exaggeration and the reality.
1. "'Get me out of this!' I bawled. 'Get me out!' I think I had the nightmarish belief that I was entombed in a mine."
2. "...Herman, still shouting, was trying to open the door to the attic, in order to go up and get my father's body out of the wreckage."

THINKING AND WRITING
Creating a Humorous Essay

Recall the amusing events that you listed before reading the essay. Use this list to tell the story aloud to different friends. Each time you tell it, try to make it funnier by exaggerating one of the events. When you have perfected your narrative, write a humorous essay based on it. In revising the essay, make sure you have included the exaggerations that worked best when you told the story aloud. You may include humorous drawings, as Thurber did. When you are finished, share your essay with your classmates.

The Night the Bed Fell  367