

# Lexia PowerUp Literacy®

## Passage Reference Guide

This resource includes the full text of passages in the Lexia PowerUp Literacy® student program.

The Passage Reference Guide is designed to support a detailed review of program passage content. Additional program content, including word- and sentence-level content, images, and questions, can be viewed using the product's Educator Mode



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# Word Study

## LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: The Picnic

"Let's go have a picnic at the pond!" Mom says to Mama and me. When we get there, the sun starts to set. As the sky turns red and pink, we sit on the pond's bank to watch the sunset. Mom takes out a basket with hotdogs and corn on the cob. We eat until it gets dark.

Then Mama gasps, "It's the North Star!" I scan the night sky and spot the beautiful star. It glints in the night and winks at me. I wish I could grab this splendid star and hold it in my hand.

A silk moth zigzags past me. It swirls right and left. Like the star, the wings glint in the dark. Then it darts through the sky and lands on the grass. Gently, Mom picks the moth up for me and puts it in my hand. She tells me, "The North Star won't fit in your hand. So, you can have this moth instead."

### Units 4-5: Two Kinds of Banks

There is a big bank where people come. At this bank, people can't put cash in. It is also not where people can pull cash out. This is a bank that is at a still pond. People might come to sit on the bank and think. They might come to the bank to swim and have a picnic. They could want to come to the bank because they want to rest. People come to this bank to do what they want and that is fantastic!

## LEVEL 3 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: The Tent at the Pond

Britt and Cass left at ten to camp at a spot next to the pond. They had a plan to set up the tent before the sun set. Yet, the trip was long. There was a lot of traffic. Britt and Cass got there just as the sun set. They would have to be fast as they set up the tent—as fast as the rabbit that ran past through the grass. They did it, but the fabric split as Britt went to zip up the last flap. Cass set out a picnic mat for Britt to sit a bit. "I will fix the rip, Britt. I insist. You have not had a rest, but I had a catnap on the trip."

## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: The Fifth Floor

There are six floors in the building. The fifth floor of the building is full of people. The people are busy, but they are not frantic. What do the busy people do on the fifth floor of the building? What would you think the people might do? Here are some hints. There is a lot of soft cotton fabric or cloth in oblong plastic bins on the fifth floor. There are a lot of pins on the floor. There is a snip, snip, snip. There is a click, clack, click, clack, click, clack, click that does not stop. What in the world do the people do? When the people are done, what have they made?

### Units 3-4: The Empire State Building

Many people around the world know about the Empire State Building in New York City. Do you know about it? This building was built in 1931. When it was done, it had 103 floors. To think that a building could have so many floors was a thrill for the public around the world. For about 40 years, it was the tallest building in the world. People from around the world would come just to see this building. People still come to see it. Have you been there?



## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: Around the World

The friends have big plans to go around the world. They want to go around the world because they have not been around the world before. The trip will last about six months. The friends have some maps that they will consult as they go around the world. The six-month trip will consist of some little trips to here and there. As they plan, they think about what they might want to have on the trip, and how long the things they have to have will last. They are sad to think of the things they will want but cannot have on the trip. The friends have to think about what they will want to have before they go. If you went on a trip of six months, what would you want to have?

### Units 3-4: Trees to Logs

The busy men come in big trucks. The many trucks are full of logs that have been cut down from trees. The logs will become buildings with one or many floors. The trees cut down for logs are stumps on the land. The public does not want land that consists of stumps. The stumps disrupt the land. The men have a plan. The men will consult with the public. What is the plan about? They will dig up the stumps and plant trees where the stumps are on the land. The stumps will not disrupt the land and trees will blossom and grow.

## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: The Opossum

Opossums are called possums in parts of the world. Many possums are as big as cats. Infant or baby possums are as big as bees. The baby possum lives in the pouch of its mother. The possum nests in trees or lives in dens. A possum hunts nuts and mice to eat. A possum can hang by its tail from a tree branch. People do not want possums to dump trash cans and eat what is in the cans, so people set traps to catch possums. Dogs and bobcats hunt possums. So a dog or bobcat will not eat it, a possum will play dead. A dog or a bobcat won't bother a possum that it thinks is dead. The possum lives in many places in the world.

### Units 4-5: The Chipmunk

The chipmunk is an animal that lives in many spots around the world. The chipmunk will live where there are many trees. The chipmunk is not as big as a possum. It is a bit bigger than a mouse. The chipmunk eats nuts and seeds. A chipmunk will stuff nuts and seeds in a little pouch in its cheek. A chipmunk will also eat the eggs of other animals and little frogs. Like possums, dogs and bobcats hunt chipmunks, but unlike possums, chipmunks won't play dead. An infant or baby chipmunk will live with its mother for about two months.

## LEVEL 4 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: Lunch with a Friend

Todd is frantic because he left in a big rush. He does not want to miss the picnic with Min where they will talk and have snacks. He brings muffins for them to eat. Then he picks a spot on the grass for them to sit. As they munch on the snacks, they discuss Min's trip. He just got back. Min tells Todd, "Twin Falls was a lot of fun. The problem was I did not bring a pad to sketch on." Todd admits that he would want a sketch of Twin Falls. "It would be as if I was in Twin Falls with you!"





## LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: What's in the Box?

When the bell rang, Tess ran to the door as fast as she could. On the steps, there was a box that she was expecting. "It's here at last," Tess said. She bent down to pick up the box. Then, on the grass out back, Tess began checking the list of contents of the box. "Yes, all the pieces are here," she said. After that, she began connecting the pieces, step by step. At last, Tess wore a big grin. Standing back, she said, "Fantastic!" She had never set up a tent before, but she did the job well. Next month, Tess will camp with her friends. She will bring the tent and will know what to do to set it up. "This will be the best camping trip yet!" Tess said.

### Units 3-4: The Attic Hunt

"Come with me up to the attic," my friend Ed said to me. "My mom wants a box of dishes that she left up there." So we went up to his attic, but there was a problem. There must have been 100 boxes on the attic floor. We did not know which box held the dishes. We began pulling stuff out of the boxes. Ed found a ribbon he had gotten in a contest when he was six. Then he held up a little velvet vest and said, "I wore this at a wedding when I was about three. After that, Ed found a plastic helmet. He put the helmet on his head and said, "This still fits me!" He found a hand puppet from his crafts class at camp. He found a trumpet and let out a big blast. He found lots of things from his past. But we never found the missing box of dishes.

## LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: Sunset

There are many high rocks at Sunset Cliff. West of this high cliff is the Atlantic Ocean. Sunset Cliff can be a busy place at the end of the day. Many people come to this spot because it is the best place to watch the sun go down. People sit on the high rocks and watch the ocean and the distant sky. Bit by bit, the big orange sun drops through the sky. Down, down it sinks, until its bottom is hidden by the ocean. It is as if the sun is about to plop into the water. The sky fills with ribbons of orange, red, pink, and other colors. People gasp and clap because the sunset is so beautiful. If you come to Sunset Cliff as the day is ending, you will see a thrilling and splendid sight. The sun puts on a beautiful show!

### Units 3-4: Collecting Shells

Clams, shrimp, mussels, and scallops are just some of the common shellfish that live in the ocean. Fish and other ocean animals eat shellfish, and the shells are left in the water. As the ocean comes up on land, it brings shells with it. The shells can be found on the sand. People have fun collecting shells. They hunt on the sand, expecting just the right shell to show up. What is the right shell? Well, it could be a thin shell or a thick one. It could be less than an inch long, or as big as a hand. Some shells are flat, and others have bumps or ribs. Some shells twist. Some shells have spots of color. People collect little common shells and shells that are big and beautiful. The sight of a splendid shell resting on the sand can bring a thrill.



## LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: The Traffic Jam

There was a big traffic jam this morning and our bus was stuck in a tunnel. Buses, cars, trucks, and cabs were all stuck in place. Nothing could get through that tunnel! The bus was full of people I see every day, all of us wanting to get to our jobs. But this morning, there was nothing we could do but sit. We just sat there together, thinking what a sad, bad day this was. Then, all of a sudden, there was a change. Some people began commenting on what was happening. Soon after that, other people were adding comments. We all spent the morning discussing how to fix traffic problems. We also got to know each other for the first time. When the bus got through the tunnel at last, we felt like friends. A bad traffic jam was a way to bring people together!

### Units 4-5: Insects

Many people think that insects are pests. Some insects do bother people and can bring harm but some insects help people. Bedbugs are insect pests. If you get up in the morning full of red spots on your skin, bedbugs may have bitten you when you slept. Bedbugs live in hidden places in the day. At night, they hunt for blood to drink. Mosquitoes are also insect pests. Like bedbugs, mosquitoes live on blood. After a mosquito sips blood, a bump shows up on the victim's skin. It swells and itches. Mosquitoes can also infect people with bad diseases. Around the world, people attempt to get rid of insect pests like bedbugs and mosquitoes. But not every insect is a pest. In fact, many insects help people. Bees spread pollen from plant to plant. Crops grow with the help of bees. Insects such as ladybugs are also a big help. They eat pests that eat plants. Some insects are pests, but others are good to have around.

## LEVEL 5 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: A Spot for the Mess

Clem had tons of things at her desk that did not have a spot and often ended up in a mess on the floor. "I have to pick up a box for the random objects at my desk," Clem said to her friend Idris. "Do you want to go with me to get one?" "Let me run up to my attic. I might have one," he said. Not long after, Idris handed Clem a plastic box. "I got some fun sandals for a trip, and I kept the box they were in. What do you think?" Clem grinned. "This is splendid. It will fit all of that stuff," she said. "Thank you!"

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: Watching Whales

This morning, a boat is setting off to watch for whales. Whales spend their lives in the ocean. They have shapes like fish, but they are not fish. Whales are mammals that have lungs and must breathe like us. When a whale comes up for air, the people on this boat hope to see it. After a while, the boat gets to the right spot for whale-watching. The whales have come to this place before because they search for a lot to eat here. These whales consume tons of krill, which are little ocean animals.

After about five minutes, children yell, "A whale!" Everyone runs to one side of the boat. A huffing sound comes through the air. Mist rises as the whale exhales air from a hole on top of its head. All of a sudden, a big black shape explodes out of the water. Then the humpback whale splashes down. What an exciting sight!

**Units 3-4: To Friends of Sunshine Lake**

There are big problems at Sunshine Lake. Glass, cans, plastic bags, and other junk are spread all over the sand. Trash is also in the water. All this trash pollutes the land and water. It can make fish and other animals ill. Hundreds of plants invade the banks. The invading plants are taking over the west side of the lake. These plants stop other plants from growing. The first day of June will be Help Sunshine Lake Day. From morning until night, we will pick up trash and dig up invading plants. We will take boats out on the water to collect junk. We will dispose of all trash in safe ways. Do you want Sunshine Lake to thrive? Then we invite you, your family, and their friends to come to help out. Together, we can make the lake fresh and beautiful again. Help us bring Sunshine Lake back to the way it should be!

**LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 2, 4: Ice Skating**

If friends invite me to try something for the first time, I sometimes say yes and sometimes say no. When my friend Drake invited me to ice-skate with him, I said yes. I had never been ice-skating before. Because it was new to me, I was scared. We went to a rink where someone could rent skates. As I was lacing up my rented skates, Drake gave me a piece of advice. He said, "Just take your time." Then he sped off. Drake could glide on those thin blades, but I could not even stand up on mine. On the ice, my legs felt like jelly. My skates kept slipping out from under me. I held onto the railing as I made little baby steps. I fell about ten times. Everyone was skating fast around the rink. Several people were spinning like tops. How did they do it? I kept at it. By the time we left together, I had made it around the entire rink one time. Next time, I may even let go of the railing.

**Units 3-4: At The Ski Slope**

Drake and Jin were in the parking lot of the ski slope after they finished ice skating together. Drake was very skilled on skates. But he did not know how to ski.

Jin began skiing with his family as a child. He had gone skiing many times. Because Drake helped him with ice skating, Jin wanted to help Drake ski.

First, they put on new plastic ski boots. Then, they walked through the parking lot to the line at the ski lift. Jin helped Drake click his boots into his skis, and they slid on their skis to the lift. When the ski lift came, they got on it next to each other. In about a minute, the lift would zip to the top of the hill. Jin and Drake rode high through the cold air to the top of the hillside.

"This is amazing!" Drake yelled. He had an epic smile on his face.

Together, they darted down the slope. Drake tripped and fell several times. Jin advised Drake how to use his skis to move right and left. Drake got better with every trip down the slope. He could not get enough of the slopes!

"What a thrill!" Drake smiled. "Thank you, Jin, for the lesson."



## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: Snakes

Many people run away at the sight of a snake. They think that the snakes are a problem and will attack and bite. Some snakes do inject venom with their fangs, so it is important to know where these harmful snakes live. But most snakes do not harm people. Knowing facts about snakes may make people less scared. People may even find things to admire about snakes. Snakes are reptiles. All reptiles have dry skin with scales. A reptile's body temperature changes with the temperature outside. A snake may sun itself to warm up but find shade when it is hot. Most snakes live where it is warm. They cannot live in places with extreme cold. A snake does not eat to warm its body. That is why big snakes may go without eating for many months. Snakes have no legs, but they have no problem getting around. They slide on land and swim in water. Some snakes even climb trees.

### Units 4-5: Wise Advice

It has been said, "If you don't make mistakes, you don't make anything." That is wise advice. If you want to accomplish anything, it is important to let mistakes help you. Your mistakes can show you what to do next time. Just look at the life and work of Thomas Edison. He invented hundreds and hundreds of things that would change the world, from electric light bulbs to machines that recorded people talking. Edison had success, but not right away. He was willing to make many mistakes. He wanted to find a long-lasting wire to use inside a light bulb, so his lab tested one thing after another. Edison found the right one at last. But only after testing a lot of things! Mistakes can frustrate anyone, but they should not be an excuse to give up. Let Edison inspire you! Think about a problem until you solve it. You can accomplish just about anything you set out to do.

## LEVEL 6 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: A Game with Rocks

Vik and some other people want to have a contest where there is a game and someone wins. He grabs five rocks from the shed and then makes a big pile of rocks on the floor. "The game is to toss a rock in the air. Then, you must grab the other rocks from the floor as that rock is still in the air. Don't let that rock drop! It should all be very fast," Vik tells them. "The rest of us should not talk. We should not distract people as they toss rocks." "If you complete the task and grab all of the rocks, then you win. You will get an orange ribbon that you can pin onto something! I hope you think this is fun!"

## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: Two Games

People often confuse the games of cricket and baseball. They think the games are just the same because they involve a bat and a ball, but the games are not the same. Each game is unique. Let's compare and contrast a few things about the games. Both games use a ball and bat. In both games, one team attempts to score runs. The opposing team wants to stop runs and put players out. The games are unlike in the rules about how a ball is and can be thrown. In cricket, one player bowls a ball and can bounce the ball and hit a batter. In baseball, a player pitches a ball and cannot bounce the ball or hit the batter.

The bats the players use are not the same. In baseball, the bat is long, narrow, and round with a batting sweet spot of only 4 square inches. That is, if a batter hits in or close to the sweet spot, that will be a good hit. In cricket, the bat is flat and has a shape like a rectangle with a handle. The batting sweet spot is 32 square inches. Because the sweet spot is bigger on a cricket bat, it is easier to hit a cricket ball than a baseball. With this knowledge, which games will have the higher score?

**Units 3-4: The Futsal Game**

"I can't wait to play soccer today!" Erica smiled at her friend Maria.

Both Erica and Maria loved nothing more than soccer. They had played together as young girls. When Erica's family visited Maria's family in Boston, Erica was excited to play soccer with her old friend. They ran to the park to begin a game, but it started to drizzle, then rain, and in no time, the girls were soaked.

Erica felt sad. "So much for soccer," she said. She would have given anything to see the sun.

"Well," Maria said, "we might be able to play futsal."

"What is futsal?" Erica asked.

Maria smiled. "It is like soccer but people play it inside! Want to try?"

Together, they walked up the road to a large building that was split into five spaces with goal nets. The spaces were smaller than soccer fields. A few people were in a huddle, waiting for others to play. They only needed two more, so with Maria and Erica, the group had enough to begin.

Because the space was so little, the game went fast. Erica ran hard. She kicked the ball. It floated past Maria and into the net. Erica scored a goal!

"How did you like futsal?" Maria asked, panting.

"This is super fun!" Erica said. "It might be even better than soccer!"

**LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 2, 4: Riddles**

People have always made up riddles. A book of collected riddles printed in 1511 was one of the first English books that people could read just for fun. A riddle tells about something in a puzzling way. Here is an old riddle:

As long as I eat, I live. But when I drink, I die. What am I? The answer to that riddle is "fire." A fire lives only if it is fed. But if it drinks water, it won't live.

Here is another example to puzzle you:

The more you take from it, the bigger it gets. What is it? The answer is "a hole."

Here is one last example:

What is it that cannot be felt, cannot be seen, makes no sound, and has never been found, yet it still has a name? Does this riddle baffle you, or do you know the answer? The name of the thing is ...nothing.

**Units 3-4: The Bat Food Riddle**

"Bats eat insects, frogs, birds, and other kinds of bats," Dr. Zina Silva tells the scientists in her lab. "But, nobody knows what the bats in this jungle eat, so that's what we must find out."

Lucas says, "This is like a riddle: How can you tell what a bat eats?"

"You look at its droppings!" Marta answers, and Dr. Silva nods.

"Yes! We can look at what is in bat droppings, also called guano, to see what they eat. The hard part will be to find the guano," Silva claims as the scientists begin their walk out to the jungle.

"Why do we want to know what bats eat?" Lucas asks Dr. Silva while they hike through the jungle.

*continued on next page*



"We want to protect the food for the bats. The moms need enough food so they can make milk for their young. This will make sure bats in this jungle are strong and safe," Dr. Silva answers.

"Solving this riddle might not be simple," Marta says as a stick insect tickles her ankle. "Guano looks like dirt, and there is dirt everywhere!"

Zina stops and says, "Bats were spotted somewhere close, so do not trample this spot! We might find guano here!"

They take time looking for guano, until at last Marta spots some. Lucas gets a little sample to take home with them.

Dr. Silva and her scientists start the walk back to the lab. She says, "We are in the middle of nowhere, but we got that sample, so we will get the answer."

## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: Quicksand

"It's like being stuck in quicksand." That's what people say when they have a big problem and see no way out of it. Does quicksand really trap people?

Quicksand is a mix of sand and water. It is found on stream bottoms and on flat sand by the ocean. The mass of wet sand is soft, and it moves when anything pushes on it. If you stumble into quicksand, you will feel like you are sinking. Your sinking body pushes water out of the sand. This makes the sand tug on you and pulls you down. Quicksand will not bury a person, but you may be stuck up to your waist.

To escape from quicksand, take your time. Do not struggle. If you are in up to your middle, float on your back. Then wiggle one leg and pull it up. It may take a while to free both legs. Then flip over and swim to the bank or shore.

### Units 4-5: The Great Houdini

No handcuffs could hold him. He could free himself from leg chains in a minute. No problem! He could escape from any jail cell. He was not in jail because he had committed crimes. He was there as a stunt, to show off his fantastic skill at escaping. He could escape from anything. His name was Harry Houdini.

Houdini invented all kinds of thrilling stunts. He could wiggle out of a straitjacket while dangling by his ankles high over a busy street. He could escape from inside steel cans full of water. He could escape from a crate nailed shut, tied with ropes, and thrown into deep water. In one stunt, he hung by his feet and was lowered into a tank full of water. People waited in great suspense to see if he would escape. He always did!

When Houdini died in 1926, at the age of 52, he had great fame. He was the best escape artist in the world.

## LEVEL 7 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: In a New City

When Anton moved to a new city, he made a goal for himself. "I intend to meet everyone in my building by the end of the month," he said to his dad. "I think that would be a great way to feel at home," his dad said.

After work, Anton would spend time in the main hall of the building, so that he could chat with people as they walked home. He met some people, but not too many. "It is a struggle to hit my goal," Anton said to his dad. "What if you get people together?" his dad said.

The next day, Anton put up a note for all to see. It said, "At six, come to the main hall and mingle with others in the building! Bring a snack." Lots of people came, and Anton met many new friends.



## LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: The Strange Kidds

"Let me introduce myself," the new kid said to me. His family had recently moved to my street. "I'm Dave Kidd," he said. "But, because of my strange skill, people call me the Strange Kidd. I'm able to occupy two places at the same time. Just watch me."

Dave ran to the end of the street and waited there. "What an interesting kid," I said to myself. I went back to my house. Standing by the door of my house was Dave. "See?" he said. That WAS strange!

Next, I met Dave on a hike. He was climbing up a steep hill, and I was going down. When I got to the bottom, there was Dave, waving hello. Something fishy was going on.

Dave kept showing up here and there at the same time. Finally, I was able to solve the puzzle. "Very funny, Dave," I said to him, "or should I call you Dave's twin?"

That was how I met my great friends Dave and Benny Kidd.

### Units 3-4: The Oak Tree

When we were growing up, there was a huge and beautiful oak tree on the side of our house. It was almost one hundred years old and truly gigantic. Its trunk was thick and as strong as steel. Its branches spread out above our house. On hot, sunny days, we would relax in a shady spot at its base. Its acorns would plop like raindrops every autumn. It was a great tree for climbing, and for sitting on a strong branch to watch the world. The tree was like a trusty sentry, keeping watch over us and protecting us. It might seem strange, but to us, that tree was almost human. We even gave it a silly name - Tiny - as a joke. We moved away from Tiny. Last week, I drove by the house. Another family lives there now. Sitting on a branch of Tiny was a girl about ten. It made me feel good to know that Tiny was still on duty.

## LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: The Giant Nile Crocodile

Hello! My name is Jimiyu. My family and I live in Kenya. Together, we opened a Nile crocodile refuge to protect crocodiles from humans and other animals.

There are many kinds of crocodiles in the world. Nile crocodiles are gigantic and can be 16 feet long! Their skin is very thick and scaly, and their noses are long. They like to lay at the bottom of the lake and move silently and softly. Only their nostrils and the tops of their heads rise above the water. They slide through mud and can even run on land. Their legs may be tiny, but they are strong. Nile crocodiles are always hungry. We feed them fish, insects, rodents, and frogs.

Letty is a giant female crocodile whose nest is on the edge of the lake. She will lay her eggs here and gently sit on them until they hatch. The eggs will incubate for three months before they hatch. Letty is a devoted mother. If another animal passes by, she will quickly lunge at it. Most of the time she is kind, but she can get protective! You must respect a crocodile mother.

People come every day to see the crocodiles. They watch them from far away so the crocodiles can freely roam.

### Units 3-4: Rats!

It's said that the "king of the beasts" is the lion. Lions are strong and may look kingly. But lions can live only in places where humans protect them, and they would die if they could not find meat. The title "king of the beasts" should

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belong to an animal that lives everywhere and eats anything. Which animal has a right to the title? How about the rat?

Rats are rodents. Two main kinds, brown rats and black rats, live all over the world. They eat foods that people toss in the trash. They also eat crops, eggs, and grains.

Rats work together to attack chickens and baby animals, too. They also spread deadly diseases. People have always attempted to kill these hated rodents. But more rats are always on the way because females can produce up to nine babies several times a year. Because rats have great success everywhere on earth, this rodent is truly king of the beasts.

## LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: As Strong as an Egg

When we think of eggs, we think of objects that crush easily. But eggs are extremely strong. To test how strong an egg is, try this. Put the ends of an egg between your flat, open hands. Squeeze your hands together with great force. That egg will not crack!

Its oval shape makes an egg strong. Each end is an example of the shape called a dome. A dome is commonly used in buildings because of its strength. When you squeeze an egg's domes, you apply a pushing force. The dome does not collapse, because the shape spreads the weight evenly down its curved sides.

If an egg is so strong, why does it crack so easily? The answer has to do with the kind of force that is applied. The dome shape easily protects the egg from forces that push - like your hands pushing against each other. But a tap on an egg is a pulling, stretching force. The shell itself is not strong at all. It stretches and cracks with just a light touch.

### Units 4-5: A Water Sport

Suppose that a person likes to play basketball and also likes to swim. That person can combine both sports in one exciting game. The game is water polo. In water polo, two teams compete to get a ball into the goal of their opponent. The goal is a net that is above each end of the pool. There are seven players on each team—six for offense and defense, and one for goalkeeping. Colors on the side of the pool show the zones of play. The ball must be held with only one hand.

Each team has only 30 seconds to try to get the ball in the goal, so speed is important. Rules prevent players from touching the bottom of the pool, so the game requires strong swimming. It is not legal to grab, push, kick, or sink a player, but players do try to get away with these moves. Water polo is an exciting game to play and exciting for the watching fans, too.

## LEVEL 8 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: A Big Day at Hugo Place

For months, staff at the new local hotel, Hugo Place, had been quite busy. The place was set to open in late June. The staff was thrilled: they had worked so hard to prep for the grand day.

On the big day, the boss spent a moment checking the list of things to do. It seemed that all was well. By ten o'clock, many people were there to see Hugo Place unlock its doors. There was just one task left: tape up a huge ribbon and cut through it!

Yet, where was the ribbon? No one had it. The item had been left off all the lists! While most just watched, a young teen pulled a small ribbon from his pocket. He walked up to the boss and said in a gentle tone, "Will this work?" The boss smiled. "That will do!" she exclaimed as she cut through the ribbon and waved the people in.





## LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: The Secret

On Tuesday, Julie Steeves said to me, "I have a secret that I'm itching to tell, but I can tell it only to a person I really, really trust. If I tell it to you, will you not breathe a word to anyone?"

I must admit I was pleased that Julie thought she could trust me. I don't even know her that well. "I pride myself on keeping secrets," I said to her sincerely.

Julie told me that she had tried out for a role in a movie and had gotten it. She was thrilled but did not want anyone else to know just yet.

Like a faithful friend, I kept that secret. But on Friday, the news of Julie's movie role had spread far and wide and all around. I was speechless until I realized what had happened. Julie did not want to go around boastfully telling about her success. So she told her "secret" to several friends—the surest way to spread any news.

### Units 3-4: A Bottle Trick

There are many facts about air and water that can be shown playfully. This bottle trick is one example. To perform the trick for friends, begin with an empty plastic bottle. Use a thick nail to pierce a hole near its bottom. Holding the bottle over the sink, fill it with water to show that the water easily spills from the hole. Then hold your finger over the hole and refill the bottle. Fill it right up to the rim, with no air space at the top. Keeping your finger over the hole, twist the cap on tightly. Be careful not to squeeze the bottle. Then take your finger away. The water will not spill from the hole. Why not? What reasons can your friends suggest?

The reason that the water stays in the bottle is that air is pressing on the bottle only from the outside. With no air inside the capped bottle to push the water out, the water stays where it is.

## LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: Around the World

Around the World in 80 Days is the title of a book by the French author Jules Verne. It was published in 1873. In the book, the main character, Phileas Fogg, makes a bet that he can travel the globe in just 80 days. The goal seems hopeless. Nobody has ever traveled at such extreme speed before. Fogg and his assistant set off on their grand adventure. They ride on railroad trains, ships, trading vessels, sailboats, a sled with sails, and even an elephant. Fogg successfully completes the trip in 80 days and wins the bet.

The book was such a huge hit that it inspired a real race around the world. Nellie Bly was a fearless reporter for the New York World. She made the voyage in 1889. At a meeting with Jules Verne in London, Bly discussed her plans. While traveling, she sent back stories of her adventures. Nellie Bly completed her journey in just over 72 days, breaking the record of the mythical Phileas Fogg.

### Units 3-4: Extreme Places

Ever since the first successful climb up Mount Everest, in 1953, there have been many other tries. People seeking adventure have tested their strength, skill, and luck to reach the highest place on earth. The steepness, thin air, freezing winds, and icy dangers have ended many attempts. Still, thousands of people have made it to Everest's summit, about 5 1/2 miles above sea level.

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In contrast, few people even know about Earth's deepest place. Extremely low places on the ocean floor are called deeps. Challenger Deep, in the Pacific Ocean, is the deepest—more than 6 1/2 miles down. In deeps, the human body would be instantly crushed if it were not protected inside a special vehicle. In 1960, two men inside a newly invented diving vehicle were the first to reach Challenger Deep. Since then, a few robot vehicles have made the dive. In 2012, James Cameron, a filmmaker, was the first to make a solo trip to Challenger Deep and back. Who will be next?

## LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: A Debate

Long ago, people built a mill and a dam on this stream. For many years, the textile industry was important around here, and the mill produced cotton fabric. The mill closed fifty years ago, but the building is still here. Now it contains shops.

The dam is still here, too, but it does no useful work. Many people believe it must be removed. They say that removing the dam would help fish travel upstream to lay eggs. They believe that the stream should run freely, as it used to do.

Other people say that the dam must stay. They look at the millpond made by the dam and see a helpful wetland. For more than one hundred years, fish, frogs, ducks, geese, and other animals have settled successfully in the millpond. This wetland may be human-made, but it provides living things with food and a place to thrive.

What might people do to decide if the dam should be removed or maintained?

### Units 4-5: Bone Facts

Where are the strongest bones in the human body? Here's a clue: These bones are also the longest. The longest, strongest bones in the human body are the two femurs, or thigh bones. They are built for strength because they must hold up the weight of the body.

The skull is also extremely strong. The skull consists of more than twenty different bones that frame the head, make up the face, and protect the brain. An infant's skull is not solid at first. The bones of the skull fuse together as the baby grows and changes. Once the bones have fused, the skull is solid and strong.

Where are the tiniest bones in the human body? The answer is "inside the skull." The tiniest bones of the body are the three connected bones of the middle ear. Their common names are the hammer, anvil, and stirrup, because they resemble these objects. These three bones, which help transmit sound waves, could easily fit on your fingertip.

## LEVEL 9 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: The Three Elephants

Three young elephants are crossing a vast stream of rushing water to get to the side with tastier grass. But, they face a problem. There is a gigantic stack of tree branches in the middle that prevents them from walking on this path.

The elephant in front struggles to push the branch away. The next elephant seems to think that he is the strongest and can move the branch. With a prideful grunt, he pushes the branch for five seconds, but it does not budge, not even a bit.

The last elephant thinks for a moment as the other elephants pant and heave, very upset and exhausted. The last elephant tells the others that if they put all their weight together, they can easily rotate the branch and move it out of the way. So, together as a team, they push the huge branch and remove it from the path!



## LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: The Thirsty Crow

Once there was a thirsty crow who found a water pitcher that had been put out on a table. When the crow put his beak into the mouth of the pitcher, he found that there was little water left in it. Much to his dismay, the crow could not reach far enough down into the pitcher to get the water. He tried and tried, but at last he had to give up in despair. Then a great thought came to him. He took a pebble and dropped it into the pitcher. He took another pebble and dropped it into the pitcher. He dropped pebble after pebble into the pitcher. At last, the water began to rise closer to the crow. After casting in a few more pebbles, the water was near enough to him that he was able to quench his thirst. In this fable, the crow shows that sometimes when someone is in great need of something, he or she can devise a helpful plan to get what he or she needs.

### Units 3-4: Restaurant Review

Last week, my friend and I visited Greens for the first time. This restaurant opened recently on Main Street in Southneck. Potted plants fill the airy dining room, and the wait staff is friendly. Most of the items on the menu are meatless. We sat at a table and sampled several dishes. The spinach salad was mouth-watering. It included chopped eggs, tomatoes, and goat cheese. The salad was drizzled with a warm, sweet maple dressing. Equally yummy was the beet and tomato salad, with crumbled cheese. The oven-roasted tofu was skillfully made. It was so crisp and spicy that even my friend, whose favorite food is hot dogs, was thinking of a second helping. But we needed room for the tropical fruit dish. This dish was made with pineapple, mango, oranges, melon, and flakes of coconut. We enjoyed every spoonful. I highly recommend Greens. This restaurant is not just for people who don't eat meat. Anyone who loves freshness and flavors will want to buy a meal here.

## LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: The Model House Project

Max walked across the classroom to join Zoya for their fourth period science class project.

"This makes me feel like a little kid again, playing with blocks!" Zoya spoke loudly so Max would hear above the classroom noise.

"But this time, we know a lot more about engineering, so we can make our model house massive!" Max replied.

"Everyone was told to make buildings as tall as possible, and we only have ten minutes!" Zoya exclaimed. Max watched Zoya throw blocks down as she said, "If I lay them down quickly, we will be able to build faster."

"I think we should slow down or the speed could destroy our work!" Max touched the house and it wobbled.

"To make it stable and strong, the weight of the blocks above should be less than the ones below or it will topple. We should put many big blocks at the bottom and small ones at the top."

"Caution is great, but because we need to get through this in time, we must do our work fast, too," Zoya said.

"What if I sort the blocks by size and you place them? That way, we can work both quickly and carefully."

Zoya pulled out the biggest blocks from the pile, and Max put down one row. Zoya followed with other portions of smaller blocks. They worked together, adding rows again and again, and the house grew.

"We finished our version of a model house, and it is strong, stable, and beautiful," Zoya said.

"We work well together," Max agreed.

**Units 3-4: Total Relaxation**

Max walked across the classroom to join Zoya for their fourth period science class project.

"This makes me feel like a little kid again, playing with blocks!" Zoya spoke loudly so Max would hear above the classroom noise.

"But this time, we know a lot more about engineering, so we can make our model house massive!" Max replied.

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"We work well together," Max agreed."

**LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 6****Units 3, 5: An Unexpected Invitation**

As everyone knows, it takes planning and repeated tries to invent a new product. But on occasion, an invention just happens, without planning. In the late 1800s, ice cream was commonly eaten from glass or metal dishes. A "penny lick" was a little glass dish of ice cream that a person licked clean. Then it was given back to the vendor to use again. This was as icky as it sounds. Another problem was that people would walk away with the dishes. Or the glass dishes would break.

At the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, vendors were busy selling different treats, including ice cream. One hot day, an ice-cream vendor ran out of dishes. Nearby, a waffle vendor had plenty of hot waffles that nobody was buying. He rolled up a waffle into a cone shape and gave it to the ice-cream vendor. The warm waffle cones filled with cool ice cream were a big hit. Quickly, other vendor teams began combining cone waffles and ice cream. And that—many believe— is how the ice-cream cone was invented.

**Units 4-5: Breaking a Habit**

Habits are repeated actions that everyone does without thinking. Many people have habits, such as biting fingernails, that they would like to break. These habits may develop in childhood. It is not easy to break a habit, but it can be done.

Because a habit is automatic, the first step is to recognize that you are doing it. Suppose that you want to stop nail-biting. Keep track of how many times you catch yourself in the act. Aim for one hundred catches. Each time, tell yourself, "OK! I'm boosting my skill at recognizing this habit."

You will begin to realize where and when you tend to bite your nails—while watching TV, for example. Recognizing where and when the habit is likely to happen will help you have several actions ready. When you catch yourself nail-biting or feel that you're about to do it, you might pick up a pencil to fiddle with, or squeeze a ball. Training yourself to do something else is important. It will help you break that habit for good.



## LEVEL 10 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: A Foul Mood

Audrick had been in a foul mood all day—again. In fact, he could not think of a time when he had been such a grouch so often. His head was nagging him, and his jaw and back teeth were in a bit of pain at times. Audrick thought he had slept well, but he was exhausted. He felt the need to yawn constantly.

It always helped Audrick to talk with someone, so he decided to mention his distress to a good friend. “I would see your dentist,” the friend suggested. “There is no downside to chatting about this with her—it can only help.”

The dentist could tell what the problem was right away. “You grind your teeth at night, and there is a lot of tension in your jaw. All of that impacts how you feel and how you sleep. I can make a device for you to put on your teeth at night. It will prevent a lot of this.”

“That sounds excellent!” Audrick responded. “I would love to wake up and enjoy my days again.”

## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2, 4: Ice from the Sky

Of the different forms of water that fall from the sky, perhaps the oddest is hail. Hailstones are balls or lumps of ice. You might expect ice to fall in winter when it is cold. But hailstorms occur at any time of year and are common in summer.

Hail forms during thunderstorms. Inside the highest sections of towering storm clouds, the temperature is below freezing. The clouds have strong updrafts, pulling water droplets up from a lower, warmer area to a higher, colder area. Tiny ice crystals may form and travel. They meet up with raindrops that are supercooled—surrounded by freezing air but not yet turned to ice. The supercooled droplets stick to the crystal and freeze, forming a hailstone layer by layer. When the hailstone grows heavy, it drops to the ground. Hailstones are mostly the size of peas or marbles, but some grow as large as softballs.

Hailstorms generally do not last long. But hailstones are hard and can fall very fast. Often hail does damage to farmland, windows, roofs, cars, and property.

### Units 3-4: Saving Water

Even in parts of the world that have plenty of rain, people should use water wisely. Conserving water reduces the costs of supplying and treating it. And in dry lands, water conservation is even more important because supplies may be low. Every person can take simple actions that should lower water use. Here are five steps to take.

1. Fix any dripping faucets or pipes in the home. A tiny leak may not seem like much, but it can add up to gallons each day.
2. Take shorter showers. Try to limit showers to just a few minutes. Consider turning off the shower before soaping up and turning it back on only to rinse.
3. Don't use the toilet for paper trash. Even a low-flow toilet uses gallons of water with each flush.
4. Don't leave the water running when washing dishes or food items. Turn off the faucet as you brush your teeth.
5. In gardens, plant flowers, shrubs, and trees that do not need much water. Water the lawn only when needed.



## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2, 4: Ragtime

The popular music we enjoy today may seem brand-new and fresh. But modern music builds on musical forms of the past. It can be interesting to discover the roots of different kinds of music and the connections to forms that followed.

In the decades before and after 1900, a new form of music became hugely popular. Young people loved its energy and playfulness. The music was called ragtime, or rag. It combined regular and uneven accents. This “ragged” beat gave ragtime its name. Marches and African American dance music were two forms that led to its development. Ragtime was born in the United States and spread to other parts of the world.

Many people played the piano for home entertainment. They bought the sheet music for ragtime songs. The songs were also recorded for phonographs. Live bands performed ragtime. Dances based on the peppy beat had names like the turkey trot and the bunny hug.

Ragtime remained popular until another form of music took its place. That form, which had its roots in ragtime, was called jazz.

### Units 3-4: Scott Joplin

Scott Joplin was born about 1867 in a town on the border between Texas and Arkansas. Joplin showed a gift for music when he was young, and he later received formal training. He became a traveling musician. He performed on the piano, sang, played the horn, and conducted bands. He also composed music.

In the late 1800s, the lively music called ragtime was becoming the pop music of its day. Joplin composed ragtime songs, or rags. In 1899, he published “The Maple Leaf Rag.” This piece for the piano would become the top-selling ragtime song in history. Another, popular Joplin rag that is still a favorite today is “The Entertainer.”

Ragtime music was influenced by African American banjo styles, off beat dance rhythms and some types of European music. Many people saw an increase in the purchase of pianos because of popularity and demand. As a trained musician, Joplin argued that ragtime was complex music with its own character that deserved respect.

## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: Birthday Art

Elly and her older brother, Arthur, planned to buy a birthday gift for their mother. Elly claimed to know exactly what their mother wanted. “I heard Mom telling a friend that a picture of planes would be great for her bedroom wall.”

Arthur frowned. “Are you sure you heard right? Why would Mom want a picture of airplanes?” “I heard her say that planes were great and would remind her of her childhood,” Elly replied. “Maybe she lived near an airport as a girl.”

Arthur and Elly searched online until they found a framed picture of airplanes. They ordered it. When the company delivered the present, their mother opened the box excitedly. At the sight of the picture, she smiled with fake joy, which didn’t fool her son or daughter.

Disappointed, Elly asked, “But didn’t you say that a picture of planes would be great on your bedroom wall?” “Oh,” said their mother with sudden understanding and a chuckle. “This is a thoughtful gift,” she said. “It’s not a picture of the Great Plains of Nebraska, where I grew up, but I love it just the same.”

**Units 4-5: The Birthday Market**

Salvador was in a great mood, because it was not a normal day. He was thirteen and his father had said they would have a special birthday together. When he found out his little sister was also coming, it set off his temper.

"You said we could go to a carnival, and Flora is too little for carnival rides," he told his father.

"Because your mother has to work, the three of us will spend the morning at the farmer's market on this perfect summer day," Papa said. A market full of farmers did not sound as fun as a carnival, but Salvador understood.

They went to the market, where farmers had their harvest from their fields and gardens. But there were also spaces for artists and makers to sell their items. Flora walked up to an artist in the corner to look at his art.

"Which do you like, Salvador? I want to buy you something special for your birthday," Flora said.

Salvador picked a copper and silver picture of a desert landscape. "It is very beautiful, thank you, Flora." As he looked at his new gift, Salvador realized he was actually glad to spend time with his sister on his birthday.

Then Salvador heard music and searched until he saw a piano, a singer, and dancers swirling with partners in a circle. Past them stood an orange tent and Salvador asked, "Is that a circus?"

"The farmer's market has a few carnival rides," Papa said with a smile. "You can ride until we are hungry and thirsty, then we will order food and enjoy the music."

"You were right: This is a perfect summer day and a special birthday after all," Salvador said.

**LEVEL 11 | SKILL CHECK****Skill Check: Getting to Know Turtles**

Every spring, a teacher asked the members of his class to team up with partners. Each team would read and present about one kind of reptile. Darlene and Omar chose to work together, and both hoped that they would get to learn about an exciting animal, like a snake or crocodile. When the teacher handed them a slip of paper with "turtle" printed on it, they both felt glum. Turtles? How dull!

With time, Omar and Darlene changed their minds. Darlene was thrilled when she discovered that turtles can live very long lives. Some survive until they are 50 or older! Omar thought it was neat that turtles cannot outgrow their shells. The shells grow with them. He added this fact to their report right away.

Darlene and Omar explained to the class that they had grown to admire turtles, even though they were sad when they first got their note from the teacher. They had also become inspired to help save turtles, as so many kinds are in danger around the world.

**LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 2****Units 2, 4: The Winner?**

Our friend Jay has a strong urge to compete. It's just in his nature. If we're riding bikes, he insists on racing. If we're playing a game, he makes sure his point count is the highest. At the pool, he has to show that he swims fastest or dives most smoothly or stays underwater longest.

One time at lunch, I happened to notice that I had eaten my banana quickly. I commented on my speedy gobbling. That's all Jay had to hear. "Watch as I eat a banana faster than thought humanly possible," he said, and then he did just that.

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Our friend Alice wrote a funny, inventive story that she read aloud in class, to great applause. Right after that, Jay said that he was writing several short stories to publish in a book!

Later, I slyly mentioned that Alice was a talented writer. "And she's so humble, too!" I said admiringly. "She never boasts. If there were a contest for 'humblest person,' she'd get first prize."

Jay began, "Well, I once..." Then he caught himself. This was one contest that Jay could not win.

### **Units 3-4: The Artists' Contest**

About 2,500 years ago in Greece, two artists achieved great fame. Their names were Zeuxis and Parrhasius. None of their artwork survives, which is a shame, because both artists were said to have impressive skill. Each was capable of painting amazingly lifelike images. We know about the artists because their stories were written down and have been passed down to modern times.

According to one story, both artists competed in a contest to see who could produce the more realistic painting. Zeuxis painted a cluster of grapes. The image looked so real that birds landed on the picture and attempted to eat the grapes. A painter who managed to trick birds must have been truly skilled!

Then Parrhasius said he was ready to show his attempt at a realistic painting. He invited Zeuxis to look at it. The painting was hidden behind a curtain, and Zeuxis went over to pull the curtain aside. That is when he realized that the curtain itself was the painting! Zeuxis admitted that his rival had won the contest. Zeuxis had only managed to trick birds, but Parrhasius had deceived a fellow artist.

## **LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 4**

### **Units 2, 4: Stick Insects**

All creatures must have ways to defend themselves from becoming food for other animals. One common defensive tactic is hiding. And an effective way to hide is with body colors and shapes that blend right into the animal's background.

In nature, many insects have bodies that mimic the plants they feed on. The insects, commonly called stick insects or walkingsticks, are amazingly adept at hiding in plain sight. As their name suggests, stick insects look just like twigs. These insects are generally brown or green, and often have lumps and spines on their bodies, just like real twigs. Most are not active during the day and rest motionless on a branch. In this way, they avoid being seen by birds and other hunters. At night, the insects feed on plants.

Stick insects come in many sizes, from less than an inch to nearly two feet long. Many stick insects live in forested and grassy parts of the tropics. But they are found in other parts of the world too. They are related to another remarkable species that uses the same defense—leaf insects."

### **Units 3-4: Searching the Forest**

Sam, Mike, and other freshmen descended downstairs and through the front door. Mr. Davis, their biology teacher, had assigned everyone to learn about disguises in nature. Sam and Mike thought the forest near the school was perfect to find examples.

"Where should we head first?" Sam asked, resting an arm on the limb of a young maple tree as the wind rustled the autumn leaves.

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"We could find good examples if we go through there," Mike said as he pointed at a shallow, green passage.

Foliage covered the forest floor in a thick, emerald carpet, making the roots a danger for tripping. Mike carefully followed Sam's steps; the ground was slick with moisture from morning dew.

Sam's eyes combed the forest, noticing a sizable knot high up a towering oak trunk. "Check out that toad... it totally looks like it could be a rock, or a pile of dirt, or something."

"Sweet, we've got our first example, but Mr. Davis said we need at least one more," Mike answered.

Mike knelt to examine the area under the teeming ferns, feeling around. He lifted a slender creature between his thumb and forefinger, its limbs grasping at the air.

"Yo, that twig you've got is moving," Sam pointed, jumping back.

"It's a stick insect, and its entire body is a type of disguise!" Mike exclaimed.

Sam's eyes danced as he scanned the tricky creature. "Then let's definitely write it on this list!"

## LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 6

### Units 3, 5: Silent Storytelling

Special cameras, film, and projectors invented in the late 1800s made moving pictures possible. At first, it was a thrill for people just to watch street scenes and everyday actions captured on film. This new form of entertainment quickly grew to include stories with actors and plots. The moving images were projected onto a big screen at a theater. People sat and watched the movie together. They had to imagine the voices and any noises because the movie itself had no sound. The years from about 1900 to 1930 are known as the silent era.

In movie theaters during the silent era, people chatted and snacked loudly. A pianist or band played music to capture the mood onscreen. The actors' faces and bodies—not voices—expressed the feelings of the characters. There were plenty of stunts, car chases, and action-packed scenes of danger. Every now and then, titles would appear onscreen. These were a few sentences to explain a character's thoughts or shifts in the plot.

After the invention of sound on film, silent movies vanished. A new era of talking motion pictures, or "talkies," began.

### Units 4-5: The Film Project

"I love that we can think outside the box for our group book report," Fatimah exclaimed. Fatimah and her two friends had assembled at her home to work on the assigned project, and they had just decided what they wanted to do.

Jeff nodded. "Making a short film for the book encourages us to picture the characters, too! What do you think, Jack?"

"It is definitely preferable to writing an essay," Jack responded.

After filming several scenes on Jeff's old camcorder, they plugged it into Fatimah's computer. The film started to play, but nothing could be heard.

Jack grew concerned and said, "Hold on, something is wrong—what happened to the sound?"

"The microphone might be damaged," Fatimah guessed. "Does anyone know how to fix it? We need to finish this project tonight!"

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"I do not know if repairing it tonight is feasible," Jeff sighed, "though it may be possible to purchase another microphone, if we had money and more time."

Fatimah's brows wrinkled in thought, and suddenly, she brightened intensely. "We can shoot a silent film!"

A visible confusion overtook the group, until Fatimah launched an online search for old Indian silent films. Black-and-white footage of beautiful film stars in elegant and elaborate clothing filled the screen.

"Many vintage Indian films were shot without including sound, so it is possible to perform our own film without talking, like this film," Fatimah exclaimed.

"We can imitate how they acted with grand gestures and huge expressions to capture feeling," Jack agreed, as Fatimah and Jeff nodded along.

After filming the new scenes, Jeff whistled excitedly. "That's a wrap... this film is creative and interesting."

"It's going to astound our teacher and classmates; such a great idea, Fatimah!" Jack agreed.

## LEVEL 12 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: The Sweetest Fruit

Maya and her stepmother work together as farmers and often plant fruit that is native to the area. Since childhood, Maya has always wanted to help her stepmother. She grew up loving the earth and how soil can make something so beautiful from simple, tiny seeds.

Now, as Maya looks outside, their land is bursting with tons of ripe papayas. She can even see excited merchants driving up to buy some of their fruit, which is popular for its sweetness. Some of these customers bought fruit last week and are back again!

Maya learned many lessons from her stepmother about the production of good fruit. "If you want fruit to survive, water it once in a while. If you want fruit to thrive, love it like your own," her stepmother would commonly say and then give her a hug.

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 1

### Unit 5: Waiting For Rong

My parents, Ma and Ba, moved our family from Hong Kong to Australia last month. They said it was a great opportunity for us. I tried to be positive and tell myself that life in a new country was an adventure.

The hardest part was that we had to wait to transport my cat Rong to our new home with us. Ma told me that an animal must be looked at and inspected for ten days before it can go home. She said, "It is a rule in Australia so imported pets will not bring in illness."

"But Rong is healthy! Our vet in Hong Kong injected him with everything he needed to come to Australia."

"Yes, but these rules keep animals here safe, so we should look at it from their point of view and respect that perspective," Ba added.

I could not say anything to contradict that, even though I felt dejected because I knew I would miss my best friend very much in this new country.

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Finally, after ten long days, we finally got to pick Rong up. As we waited quietly to be called by the inspector, I felt like my nervousness would erupt from my body like lava. Would Rong be coming home with us? The silence was broken with an abrupt howl as the door opened. Rong sounded like he wanted to eject himself from the inspector's arms.

"I can report that your cat is very fit; however, he was a little destructive, and he tried to take apart everything in his path," the inspector said, and I noticed scratches on the inspector's clothes and Rong's portable pet carrier. "I think he missed you, and I predict he will be fine once he is home."

"That is spectacular news," Ba said as I greeted my best friend with a hug. With Rong back by my side, I knew we could take on our new home together.

### **Unit 6: The Myth of Melampus**

An ancient Greek myth tells about a man named Melampus. He rescues two baby snakes after the destruction of their nest. He feeds them and cares for them, and they are grateful. One night while he is sleeping, the snakes lick his ears with their tongues. The next morning, his thoughts are interrupted by strange sounds. Listening closely, he is amazed to find that he is hearing the language of birds and other creatures. He understands what they are saying!

Melampus is able to use this gift to predict events. One time, his enemies capture and imprison him. In his jail cell, Melampus hears the worms talking inside the wooden timbers that support the roof. From their descriptions, Melampus can tell that the timbers are nearly eaten through. Melampus is sure that the roof will soon collapse. He reports this knowledge to his captors and demands to be moved. The captors inspect the timbers and see no problem. But they do what Melampus asks and transport him to a new cell. Within hours, Melampus' prediction comes true, and the roof caves in. Suddenly respectful of their prisoner's special gift, the captors set Melampus free.

## **LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 2**

### **Unit 4: Nobody Knows I'm Here**

In 1897, the great science-fiction writer H.G. Wells published a novel in which the main character is a mad scientist. Like other mad-scientist characters in fiction, this one makes a discovery that turns out to be terribly destructive. The character finds a way to become invisible ; then, unseen, he commits crimes. Wells was not the first writer to envision a character with the ability to hide in plain sight. An ancient Greek myth, for example, tells of a magic cap of invisibility , which helps the hero Perseus sneak up on and slay a monster. In much more recent stories, the hero Harry Potter wears a magic cloak to become an unseen spectator of events around him.

Invisibility is a compelling concept in fantasy tales. But what about real-life? Interestingly, some scientists have been studying the reduction of visibility of objects. They are working with special materials that do not bounce light waves in normal ways. These materials might be used to construct "cloaking devices." According to scientists, such devices are far from reality, but not impossible. So perhaps someday, objects might indeed seem to vanish. That would truly be a spectacular achievement!

### **Unit 5: Hearing Color**

Neil Harbisson was born without the ability to see color. Throughout childhood, he could see only in black-and-white. Neil went to college at an art school, where his unique vision encouraged him to produce black-and-white artwork. While he was a student, Neil was introduced to some researchers, and together they invented an interesting device that turns the visual, like color, into something auditory that can be heard.

A screen placed before Neil's eyes extracts information from light waves and turns it into sound waves, which are audible. In addition to that, because the sound waves are conducted through the bones of Neil's skull, he feels

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them as vibrations, too. Neil gets to experience every color, even those that are invisible to other people's sight, as sound vibrations.

With his new device, Neil became a visual artist and learned to turn the sound waves into something other people can see in color. He now produces attractive artwork that has found a devoted audience. His art combines the visual and the auditory in visionary productions. For example, he uses his device to turn famous speeches and songs into colorful works of art. Neil provides evidence that people with imagination can find exciting ways to explore and share their thoughts and feelings. Neil's special device is not a product for sale, but people from around the world can discover some of Neil's audio and visual productions online.

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 3

### Unit 7: Repelling Mosquitoes

That high-pitched whine right by your ear is an awful annoyance! It comes from the fast-beating wings of a female mosquito. The mosquito is probably attracted to the carbon dioxide you are exhaling with each breath. A mosquito injects its tubelike proboscis into the skin and sips a blood meal. What's left behind on the skin is an itchy swelling. The "bites" of some mosquitoes can spread diseases, so people are always looking for ways to repel these pests. What methods work?

If less skin is exposed, mosquitoes are less likely to land on it. That's why people should wear long sleeves and long pants, especially at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active. Light-colored clothing is harder for mosquitoes to detect from a distance. And loose-fitting clothing is harder for them to stab through. Health experts say that a chemical called DEET is an effective repellent. When spread on the skin, DEET provides long-lasting protection from mosquitoes. There are also natural repellents developed from the oil of the lemon-eucalyptus plant. Scientists are continuing to research methods and products in the war against harmful mosquitoes.

### Unit 8: Common but Unusual

Most materials expand, or stretch, when heated. As they lose heat, they contract. You can test this for yourself by inflating a balloon and placing it in the freezer. The molecules of air reduce their activity inside the cooling balloon, and the balloon deflates as a result. One extremely common substance has unusual properties. It's water. If you fill a plastic cup to the rim with water and set it in the freezer, the water will start to contract. However, the molecules of water will start to expand as the water gets close to freezing. Water changes from a liquid into a solid: ice. The ice bulges out of the top of the cup.

This concept is also shown by comparing a volume of ice with the same volume of liquid water. The water weighs more than the ice, because water is denser in its liquid state. That difference in density is the reason an ice cube floats in a glass of water. It also explains why only the surface of a lake freezes. Luckily for the life forms dependent on liquid water, ice floats instead of sinking.

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 6

### Unit 5: Madagascar

Madagascar is the fourth largest island in the world. It is located about 200 miles off the southeast coast of the African continent. Madagascar's isolation has resulted in unique wildlife and plants. Living things that share ancestors with mainland forms have developed differently here. The elephant bird once lived on Madagascar and nowhere else. This giant bird weighed about one thousand pounds! After people arrived on the island, these

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flightless birds became extinct .

The best-known creatures of Madagascar are probably the lemurs (LEE-merz). Many lemurs resemble monkeys, which are their relatives. Lemurs live mainly in trees, but Madagascar has a severe problem with deforestation. Because lemurs are losing their habitat, conservationists worry that some species will not survive. Even in regions that are protected, illegal logging takes place. Loggers can get high prices for hardwood species such as ebony. Many people in Madagascar are subsistence farmers. They provide for their families by clearing land in order to plant crops. The result is the destruction of forests and the loss of unique wildlife.

### **Unit 6: A New Kind of Art**

The cultures of Europe and of regions settled by Europeans are often called Western. Western cultures have many art forms in common. Western painting, for instance, has a long history of being realistic. Artists attempted to represent real life in landscapes, portraits, still lifes, and more. The artworks also projected feelings and moods. At the start of the twentieth century, some Western artists began to reject traditional forms. They explored styles that were less like illustrations of the real world. Pulling away from old ideas led to new modes of expression. One result is a category known as abstract art. An abstract painting may show a real object, but the artist has distorted or rearranged elements so that it no longer looks realistic. Many abstract artworks do not show objects at all. In these nonobjective works, artists focus their attention on colors, lines, textures, and shapes. Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century, Abstract Expressionism arose. Spattered, splashed, and dripped paint are frequently found in this style of abstract art. Abstract Expressionists tended to work on large canvases, and the paintings may suggest action and motion.

## **LEVEL 13 | SKILL CHECK**

### **Skill Check: A Singer with a Dream**

Ever since Alang was a young child, people were highly impressed by his passion for singing and his beautiful voice. He was just five years old when he went for an audition to sing the national anthem for a basketball game!

When Alang sang at home, his parents whispered and tip-toed around the house to avoid interrupting him. Even if they did make noise, Alang would usually keep singing because he rarely got distracted by anything.

When he got older, Alang produced songs that he hoped would be played on the radio everywhere. He wanted his songs to be special and to touch people's hearts.

Alang sent songs to local radio stations. Despite several rejections, Alang remained patient and positive. He kept working at it, and then one day an envelope arrived. It was a contract from a radio station that wanted to play his songs!

## **LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 1**

### **Unit 5: Living Together**

Two different organisms living closely together have a relationship called symbiosis. One symbiotic relationship is parasitism. A parasite is an organism that lives off its host animal and may cause physical harm. Biologists consider a mosquito to be a parasite because it feeds off blood. Mosquitoes may also deliver parasites that live inside the body. One example is the single-celled Plasmodium; this pathogen causes the human disease of malaria.

Another symbiotic connection is commensalism. One organism benefits, without harming or causing any pathology in the host. The clownfish, for example, has a mucus coating on its skin that protects it from the toxic

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tentacles of the sea anemone. Living among the tentacles, the clownfish is safe from predators.

A third form of symbiosis is mutualism, in which two organisms benefit each other. For example, at “cleaning stations” on a coral reef, little fish called wrasses have a safe technique for getting food. Large fish open their mouths to allow the wrasses to gobble parasites. Mutualism is involved in human health; the body depends on microbiota feeding inside the digestive tract.

All throughout the biosphere—wherever living things exist on Earth—symbiosis can be found.

### **Unit 6: What and Why on Earth**

Many people mistakenly believe that geography is simply the study of details found on maps, like nations’ capitals and the location of mountain ranges. But geographers are actually concerned with big questions about planet Earth. They study the features of Earth’s surface, the atmosphere surrounding it, and all of its living things, including people. Because geography covers so many different topics, it is broken into different fields of study. The study of Earth’s land, water, and climate is called physical geography. Within this category are other fields, such as oceanography, climatology, and biogeography, which includes research into why certain plants and animals live in particular regions. Human geography is another enormous field. It includes studies of how people’s cultural practices, movements, and technologies have changed Earth over time.

Geographers create maps using techniques that involve computerized information systems. Maps might show anything from wind patterns in both hemispheres to population changes in an urban center. Information is shared with researchers in other fields. Scientists who often work with geographers include geologists, who study forces that change Earth. Geographical studies are also useful to biologists, who study living things.

## **LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 2**

### **Unit 4: Body and Mind**

A physician is a medical doctor who is trained to diagnose and treat illnesses. During a physical exam, a physician checks a patient’s skin, eyes, and ears. To listen to heartbeats and breathing, a physician uses a stethoscope to amplify sounds within the chest. Physicians give patients vaccines to prevent illness and may prescribe drugs such as antibiotics to treat bacterial infections. Patients appreciate the sympathetic listening of a physician who has a warm “bedside manner.”

Many physicians are specialists who treat particular organs or systems. Not all perform physical exams. One example is a pathologist, who identifies changes in tissues taken from the body. Looking through powerful microscopes to detect signs of infection or other abnormalities, these specialists provide other physicians with needed information.

Some medical doctors specialize in mental health issues. Psychiatrists treat patients with emotional challenges. These doctors listen with empathy, to understand what is troubling the patient. They prescribe medicine as an aid to relieve suffering.

Many technicians work in the varied fields of health care. They do everything from drawing blood to scanning internal organs with X-rays, ultrasounds, and other imaging technologies.

### **Unit 5: Earth on the Move**

A cross-section diagram of Earth shows that our planet is made of layers. Earth’s outermost layer is the crust. When we refer to Earth’s physical features, we’re talking about the crust. The thinnest of the planet’s layers, the crust has tall mountains, deep valleys, and other geological formations. The thick rocky layer below the crust is the

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mantle. Together, the crust and upper mantle form the lithosphere, which is broken up into interlocking plates. The plates are in motion, and their features and actions are studied by geophysicists, including oceanographers and geologists.

The field of geophysics also includes scientists who study earthquakes. Earthquakes produce vibrations called seismic waves, which reveal details about Earth's inner structure. The scientists who study earthquakes are called seismologists. They use instruments called seismometers to measure seismic waves. Computer-recorded data about ground motion is shown in seismograms.

Even with the most up-to-the-minute technologies, earthquake prediction is still difficult. Scientists cannot tell exactly WHEN an earthquake will occur, though they do know WHERE it is likely to occur. In regions that are prone to earthquakes, architects and engineers can design structures and choose locations to reduce damage from earthquakes.

## LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 3

### Unit 5: Bodies in Space

From prehistoric times, people have observed patterns in the night sky. The earliest sailors depended on astronavigation, determining their locations by the positions of stars. People imagined that star groupings resembled animals, humans, and objects. Their mythology explained how the star groups, or constellations, got up there. The night sky changes over the course of a year, so people tracked and measured the changes. They believed that the positions of the sun, moon, stars, and moving bodies in space could help them predict events on Earth. A king, queen, or other monarch wanted a person on hand to explain these heavenly signs and give advice about the best times for action. Such experts were called astrologers. With the invention of the telescope in the early 1600s, people could magnify bodies in the night sky. They gained understanding of the stars and the motions of planets and Earth. The science of astronomy was born. There have been many technological advances since then. In modern times, astronomical observations are made with telescopes that detect not just visible light but radiation of different kinds. Today's astronomers have studied astrophysics, applying principles of physics to understand stars, planets, galaxies, and the universe.

### Unit 6: The Science of Discovery

When Aisha and her siblings were young, they all loved science, but they had contrasting thoughts about which branch of science was the best. Now that they are studying at university, they are discovering which path they want to follow.

Aisha enjoys biology and wants to be a doctor someday. She is always reading about new findings in cardiology, the study of the heart, and pathology, the study of disease. She visits the lab at her school and uses the high-power microscope to examine cells in the human body at tiny, microscopic levels.

While Aisha enjoys looking at tiny, close objects, her brother Muhammad looks at massive, far-away objects. He studies astronomy and the weather in space, such as solar wind and geomagnetic storms. He hopes to become an astronaut someday. Once, he invited Aisha to use his telescopic lens to view the stars. Aisha was impressed with the skilled technique her brother displayed while using the telescope, but she missed her own lab and microscope.

Aisha's sister, Putri, is a geologist who studies Earth. She uses geographic imaging to study Earth's core. She hopes to get a job predicting volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Putri asked her siblings to join her on a hiking expedition to Peru to collect rock samples, but they told her that they prefer the calm atmosphere of their labs.

Aisha, Muhammad, and Putri's parents know how difficult it is for the siblings to have empathy for each other's specific interests and passions. Nevertheless, when the siblings disagree, their parents remind them that Earth's biosphere is enormous in size. There is room for all their interests.





## LEVEL 14 | SKILL CHECK

### Unit 6: Body Heat

Humans and other mammals, as well as birds, heat their own bodies through biochemical processes. Ectotherms, or “cold-blooded” animals such as reptiles, depend on outside heat to warm themselves. Mammals and birds are “warm-blooded,” or endothermic. However, that doesn’t mean that human bodies are unaffected by outside temperatures.

A thermometer shows that a normal body temperature is 97.8–99 degrees Fahrenheit, or 36.5–37.2 degrees Celsius. But that reading may drop dangerously low in a condition called hypothermia. If exposed to the cold without enough clothing protection, the core body temperature may drop below 95°F (35°C), or much lower. Low body temperature causes physiological changes. Breathing and the heart rate slow. The brain slows, too, and the person cannot think clearly and find safety. Death may be the result, unless emergency warming takes place.

Too much loss of heat can kill, but the opposite condition—hyperthermia—can also be deadly. On hot, humid days, people need to stay hydrated and seek cool places. Overheating and dehydration are dangerous. Muscle cramps, dizziness, confusion, and nausea are signs of hyperthermia. If heat stroke occurs, the person may become unconscious. Heat stroke requires care from a physician or emergency medical technicians.

### Unit 7: Under the Sea

In 1977, scientists inside a deep-sea vehicle were exploring the geology of a seafloor region where Earth’s plates spread apart. The scientists discovered an opening to Earth’s inner heat, a hydrothermal vent. Since then, much more has been learned about these remarkable regions, where fluids are super-heated by the molten rocks called magma.

The temperature at a hydrothermal vent can be many times higher than the boiling point of water, but the extreme pressure at these depths prevents water from changing into vapor. At these super-high temperatures, geochemical reactions occur. One result is the formation of chimney-like structures made of minerals.

Before the discovery of hydrothermal vents, scientists believed that all life depended on sunlight. Green plants and microscopic organisms use the sun’s energy to make food in a process called photosynthesis. Sunlight does not reach the seafloor, so photosynthesis cannot occur. Yet there is amazing biodiversity at hydrothermal vents.

At a hydrothermal vent, chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide provide bacteria and other microorganisms with needed energy. These “super-heat-loving” organisms, called hyperthermophiles, become the base of a food web. Giant tubeworms, as well as shrimp and mussels, are members of a thriving biological community at the bottom of the sea.

## LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 6

### Unit 7: Scenes of Nature

Ansel Adams was born in San Francisco, California, in 1902. As a boy, he had trouble concentrating in school. In his autobiography, published in 1984, Adams described the scattered attention and great physical energy he had when young. “Today I would be labeled hyperactive,” he wrote.

As a young teenager, Adams began to play the piano. Through serious study of music, he learned to channel his energy and focus attention. It was not through music that Adams achieved fame, however; it was through another form of art that required discipline—photography.

Adams always loved the natural world. He often hiked through the Yosemite Valley in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. Part of Yosemite National Park, this area has gorgeous scenery and fascinating geological formations.

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Adams became the photographer for a conservation group, the Sierra Club.

Adams went on to invent techniques for making dramatic photographs of natural scenes. "Adams's technical mastery was the stuff of legend," wrote William Turnage, author of a biographical article.

An environmentalist, Adams worked to preserve the scenes of natural beauty he depicted so splendidly. A year after his death in 1984, cartographers added a new label to their maps. A Yosemite peak was named Mount Ansel Adams.

### Unit 8: Pyramids

A pyramid is a geometric shape with a square base and four triangular sides that share a top point. Three huge pyramids at Giza, in Egypt, are world-famous architectural wonders. They were built as tombs for Egyptian monarchs more than 4,500 years ago. The largest, the Great Pyramid, contains more than two million stone blocks, each weighing more than two tons. Ancient Egyptian technology did not include iron tools or wheeled vehicles. The limestone blocks were cut to measure and dragged. Tens of thousands of workers and extreme physical labor were required. The pyramids are tourist attractions today.

Pyramids were also built in ancient times in the world's Western Hemisphere, in Central and South America. Many of these pyramids had partial triangular faces and a flat top. The surfaces had steps. Research in archaeology has determined that priests climbed the steps to perform religious ceremonies at a temple at the top. The Maya people showed great technical skill in building the limestone pyramids at Chichen Itza in Mexico. These structures are very popular in tourists' photographs. A stepped pyramid built by the ancient Moche people of Peru was made with millions of mud bricks. Moche pyramids are also favorites of photographers.

## LEVEL 14 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: A Spot in the Stars

Mateo is an architect, a person who designs new buildings. His sister, Sonya, is a builder. Mateo and Sonya once planned and constructed an astronomy building for people to watch stars at night. It became the tallest building in the city!

As he planned the building's structure, Mateo had to consider geometry, in order to know how much land and space the building would need. When she constructed the floor, Sonya used technology to do the work she and her team could not do alone, like carrying heavy pieces of wood and metal beams. This approach was also convenient for making the dome, the round or spherical part of the roof. Below the dome was the telescope, where people could easily view constellations, or groups of stars, from far away.



# Grammar

## LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: Pavement Triangle

Pavement Triangle is a game that two or more friends can play outside. You will need pavement chalk. You will also need small objects to throw, such as bottle caps or pebbles. Start by drawing a giant triangle on a flat pavement. Then draw four lines across the triangle to divide it into five parts. Number the parts 1 to 5 from bottom to top. After that, draw another line below the triangle. That shows where the players should stand. For each turn, make three throws. If your object lands in a numbered part, you get that number of points. If it lands on a line, you get no points. Add up the points. The player with the highest score wins that round. Keep playing to make your total scores grow!

### Units 3-4: The Relay Race

On the last day of camp last summer, we played team games. My team was the Rabbits. My teammates picked me to be the fourth runner in the relay race. The fourth runner must be the fastest runner.

As the race began, the first Rabbit pulled ahead of the other runners. She handed the baton to the second Rabbit. The second Rabbit pulled even farther ahead. The third Rabbit had a big lead when I grabbed the baton from him. I zoomed ahead. I was going to win the race for my team!

Then, I lost my grip on the baton. It flew out of my hand. By the time I picked it up, another runner had passed me. I couldn't catch up. The Rabbits lost the race because of me. I felt terrible.

One of my teammates told me, "We're happy to win second place. You ran like the wind!" The other Rabbits hugged me, and that felt good. My teammates made me feel like part of the team and a lot better about my mistake.

## LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: Food from Plants

Human beings depend on plants for food. We eat the leaves of some plants, such as lettuce and cabbage. We eat the roots of plants, including carrots and turnips. When we eat potatoes, we're eating plant stems that grow underground. When we eat broccoli, we're eating flower buds. We eat the fruits of apple, orange, and cherry trees. Farmers grow certain kinds of plants to gather the seeds made by the plant. The seeds are called grains. Corn, rice, and wheat are examples of grains. Flour is made from grains. The flour is used to make bread, noodles, and breakfast cereal. Different parts of plants feed people all over the world.

### Units 3-4: Poppa's Diner

My favorite restaurant is Poppa's Diner on Water Street. From a wall of windows in the back, you can see a beautiful lake. It's peaceful to sit at a table there. But the restaurant is special mainly because of the food. Everything is fresh and cooked just right. Steam rises from the hot, soft rolls of bread. They melt in your mouth. They taste delicious dunked in Poppa's famous spicy chili or thick soup. Poppa's is also known for crab cakes. When people take their first bite of a crab cake, they always close their eyes. They always say, "Mmmmmmm." The desserts are huge! Three people can share just one slice of warm and tasty apple pie. Everyone will feel full and happy after a meal at Poppa's Diner!



## LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: Lightning Safety

When lightning strikes, its electricity can kill animals and people. That is why you and your pets should never be outside during a thunderstorm. If you hear thunder rumbling when you are outside, what should you do? Find shelter—and fast! The safest shelter is a building that has plumbing or electric wiring. If lightning strikes, electricity will travel through the metal and wires instead of your body. But do not touch any faucets, pipes, or wires during the storm. Also, stay away from electric plugs.

If there is no nearby building, you can seek shelter inside a car or other vehicle. The vehicle must have a metal roof. Make sure the doors and windows are closed. Don't touch the metal parts of the vehicle. If lightning strikes, the vehicle will probably be damaged or destroyed. But you will be protected. If a thunderstorm is starting, do NOT stay in a swimming pool or stand under a tree! It is never safe to be outside during a thunderstorm. The rule to remember is, "When thunder roars, go indoors!"

### Units 3-4: I Love Thunderstorms

When thunder rumbles and lightning flashes, some people are frightened. Not me! I think that thunderstorms are magnificent!

One reason I love thunderstorms is the noise of thunder. There are so many different sounds to listen for. Sometimes the air fills with rustles and crackles. It sounds as if a giant candy is being unwrapped. Sometimes thunder booms like exploding fireworks. It's thrilling to feel the sound waves traveling right through my body.

Another reason I love thunderstorms is the lightning. There are so many different kinds of lightning to see. Sometimes the whole sky flickers with light. Sometimes, yellow-white lines of electricity streak between cloud and ground. I might see one crooked line or branching pathways. It's amazing to imagine just how hot that lightning is—hotter than the sun!

Of course, lightning IS dangerous. Being outdoors during a thunderstorm could be deadly. But because I'm always inside a safe building, I am not afraid. It's exciting to hear and see the sound-and-light show. I love thunderstorms.

## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: A Different Kind of Flight

Make a picture in your mind of an animal that flies. Are you picturing a bird or an insect? Those are common flying animals. You probably are NOT picturing a fish. It might surprise you to know that some kinds of fish do fly. The ocean fish called flying fish can take flight.

A flying fish has a powerful tail. It uses its tail to push its body up and out of the water. In the air, the flying fish spreads out its large fins. Because the fins act like the wings of a bird, the fish stays up. Flying fish may glide above the water for more than half a minute! Some can cover a distance equal to more than two football fields before diving back into the water.

Why do flying fish burst out of their ocean homes to glide in air? Flying fish need to escape from big, fast fish that are hunting them. The hunters cannot follow the fish into the air. Flying is certainly an unusual behavior for fish, but it may keep them safe.

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**Units 3-4: Backyard Feeders**

One morning, I noticed birds munching on seeds in my backyard. They were picking the seeds from a tray hanging from a pole. I said to myself, “Those humans from the house set up a squirrel feeder just for me!” I quickly climbed the pole. I chased the birds away with a flick of my bushy tail. Then I sat on the tray and gobbled all the delicious seeds.

A few days later, the tray was gone. In its place hung a box with a door. When birds landed on a bar, the door opened, and seeds spilled out. “Another squirrel feeder!” I said with delight. Up the pole I climbed, pushed the bar, and began feasting.

Soon after that, the humans hung a different kind of feeder from the pole. It had a cover that made it hard for me to reach the seeds. But once I stretched my body and dangled in just the right way, those seeds were mine!

About a week later, a new feeder hung from a wire strung between trees. I held my tail high to balance on the tightrope to reach my meal of seeds. The humans set out other squirrel feeders after that. Then, one day, there was no feeder in my backyard. Maybe the humans had run out of seeds. As I patted my full belly, I said to myself, “Well, it was fun while it lasted.”

**LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 1-2: Across Sand and Snow**

Through most of human history, people relied on their own muscle power to get from place to place—they simply walked. But as time passed, people found that they could also use the muscle power of animals. They discovered how to train animals to help them travel and carry goods. Two animals important in transportation are the camel and the dog.

For thousands of years, desert people of Africa and Asia have used camels for transportation. Deserts are dry lands that can be very hot. A camel’s body is adapted to heat and lack of water. Its feet are shaped to walk easily on sand. A camel is strong enough to carry loads weighing hundreds of pounds. In ancient times, traders used camels to carry goods between China and Europe. A large group, called a caravan, sometimes had more than a thousand camels in it.

In lands covered with ice and snow, wheeled vehicles slip and get stuck. Sleds with runners, however, slide easily. Long ago, Arctic people built sleds for transportation. They trained dogs to pull the sleds. They bred strong dogs with thick, warm fur, such as the Siberian husky and the Samoyed. Sled dogs were often hitched together in teams. Today, snowmobiles are a common form of transportation in the Far North. But sled dog races remain a popular sport.

Transportation can be difficult in deserts and in frozen lands. With the help of animals, people found ways to take successful journeys.

**Units 3-4: A Group Portrait**

What’s a group portrait? Well, it’s usually a picture of a group of people. But you and three friends can have fun making a different kind of group portrait. Your portrait will show one strange creature drawn by four artists. Here’s how to do it. To make one creature, your group will need a sheet of drawing paper and colored pencils. Fold the paper in half top edge to bottom edge. Then fold it again top to bottom. You will have four equal boxes, one on top of the other.

The first artist secretly draws the head and neck of a creature in the top box. Then the artist makes a couple of light marks in the box below, to show artist 2 where the neck ends. Artist 1 folds the paper so that the head and neck can’t be seen.

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After drawing the creature's upper body and arms in the second box, artist 2 marks the third box to show where the upper body ends. Artist 2 then folds the paper to hide what was just drawn. Next, artist 3 draws the creature's lower body and legs in the third box. Artist 3 marks the bottom box to show where the legs end and folds the paper again. Artist 4 draws the feet in the bottom box.

Each artist works so that the others cannot see what is being drawn. When artist 4 has finished, they then unfold the paper to reveal the entire creature to the group. If you like your creature, give it a name. Put your group portrait on a wall for others to enjoy.

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: Read This Book!

For the Anderson Public Library's annual Reader's Choice Award, I nominate the book *Liar & Spy* by Rebecca Stead. This is a terrific novel, and I highly recommend it.

The characters in *Liar & Spy* seem like real-life kids, but they act in intriguing ways. The main character is Georges, a seventh-grader who is bullied at school but pretends not to care. Georges has just moved to an apartment building where he meets a boy named Safer. They form a friendship based on spying on a mysterious neighbor. Other unusual characters are Candy, Safer's candy-loving sister, and a classmate named Bob English Who Draws. The stories behind the characters' strange names are part of what makes the book so interesting.

The author's descriptions are another reason to read the book. For example, when time seems to slow down, "everyone's voices transform into something that sounds like underwater whale-singing." The narrator attends a "really old school in Brooklyn that smells like a hundred years of lunch." A dog named Lucky is "one of those incredibly slobbery dogs, with slime leaking over black lips at the corners of her mouth." Descriptions like these are vivid and fun to read.

Readers will be eager to find out what happens to Georges in school and on his spy missions. Readers will also want to see how the author puts together all the mixed-up pieces in the plot. What are the connections among the study of taste buds in science class, a job walking dogs, and messages in fortune cookies? What do parrots nesting in the city have to do with a famous artist's painting? The amazing thing is that the author does tie everything together. The ending will probably come as a surprise.

*Liar & Spy* has interesting characters, vivid descriptions, and an attention-grabbing plot. What more could a reader want? I am sure that other readers at the Anderson Public Library will agree with me. This book deserves the Reader's Choice Award!

### Units 3-4: Our Dog Park

Friends of Farmingham Dogs, FFD, is an organization that is doing great work for our town. FFD is run by volunteers who care about dogs and want them to have a safe place to play. Please help FFD raise money to build a dog park on River Road.

Dogs need exercise to be healthy. They need opportunities to play with other dogs in order to develop social skills. They deserve the joy of running freely. Farmingham dogs can never run off-leash on public property because their owners would be fined for breaking the town's leash law. Many owners keep their dogs tied up on private property, too, for fear that an unleashed dog might run off and be hit by a car. A fenced-in dog park will give dogs the freedom to run and play in a large area.

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As a consequence of FFD's discussions with officials over the past year, town land at the end of River Road has been set aside for the dog park. Now, the park must be built. Trees must be cut down. The land has to be prepared for proper drainage. A fence and a parking lot need to be built, too. All will cost money. There are more than 3,000 licensed dogs in town, and FFD is reaching out to their owners and friends to donate money to complete the dog park.

On the last Saturday in September, FFD is holding a party in Bleeker Park. Dog owners and dog lovers are invited to contribute what they can afford and join in the fun. Participants will learn training tips from experts. Dogs can enter beauty, obedience, and agility contests. All dogs must be leashed in Bleeker Park, but next year's party will be different. With generous support from friends and neighbors, the party will be held at the brand-new Farmingham Dog Park on River Road.

FFD needs everyone's help to make our dog park a reality. Please contribute so that our dogs can be healthy, happy, and free.

## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-2: The Message in a Bottle

"Did you hear about that guy in Midbay who found a message in a bottle?" Bo asked Seth. The brothers were walking along the ocean bay near their home. Midbay was their neighboring town. Bo explained that a man found a glass bottle on the beach. Inside was a folded paper. Ten years earlier, a sailor had written his name, address, and a few words on the paper and tossed the bottle overboard. Bo said, "The guy who found the bottle got in touch with the sailor, and the story was in the news."

"Awesome!" Seth said, scanning the beach as he added, "Finding a message in a bottle would be so fantastic."

The story stayed in Seth's mind. What a thrill it would be to find a bottle that had been floating for years, carrying a message from stranger to stranger! Seth couldn't stop thinking and talking about it. Finding a message sounded so mysterious and wonderful.

Seth took daily walks along the shore, but instead of looking out at the water, his eyes looked down. He was on the hunt for half-buried bottles, but he never found one that wasn't broken.

"Finding messages in bottles almost never happens," Bo told Seth on one of their walks. "That's why it makes the news." But Seth insisted that bobbing bottles were on their way to shore, and he would find one someday.

One morning, Seth awoke feeling lucky. It was a special day—his birthday—and he had a feeling that a surprise was coming his way. He ran down to the beach for his morning stroll. He hadn't walked far when he saw something sparkling in the wet sand. It was a glass bottle with a screw top lid. Folded paper was inside!

Seth raced back to his house. "Look what I found!" he shouted as he waved the bottle over his head.

"What's the message?" asked Bo. Seth was too excited to notice that Bo was winking.

Seth unscrewed the top, shook out the paper, and carefully unfolded it. He read the message aloud: "May you always find whatever you are looking for. Happy birthday!"

### Units 3-4: Governing Ourselves

"Raise your hand if you want an outdoor study hall today," the teacher says to the class. After counting the raised hands, the teacher says, "We have twelve votes for a study hall inside and fourteen for an outdoor study hall. Get your coats—we're all going outside." By voting for what they want to do, these students have taken part in their

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own government. That is just what the citizens of a democracy do. A democracy is a form of government in which citizens rule themselves. The two main kinds are direct democracy and indirect democracy.

In a direct democracy, citizens vote for their own laws. The word democracy comes from ancient Greek and means “rule by the people.” In some city-states in ancient Greece, male citizens met to vote on actions their whole community would take. These city-states practiced direct democracy. Direct democracy is still practiced in some towns in the United States. Citizens come together once a year in a town meeting and vote on issues affecting their local community, such as how to spend money collected through taxes.

Direct democracy may work for fairly small communities, but it would not be practical for big cities or nations. Imagine tens of thousands or even millions of citizens gathering to debate laws and vote. What a scene of confusion! In contrast to voting for laws themselves, the citizens of an indirect democracy vote for their lawmakers. An indirect democracy is also called a representative democracy, because voters choose the people who will represent them in government. Most modern democratic nations are indirect democracies.

What do students voting about recess, citizens voting for their own laws, and citizens voting for their lawmakers all have in common? They all agree to majority rule. At least more than half—a majority—of voters must be in favor of an action in order for it to take effect.

What about those students who voted for indoor recess? They must go along with the majority and have outdoor recess. In a democracy, citizens or lawmakers who hold opposing views must accept the majority’s decision. That is a basic principle of democracy. It allows community members to stay together and work as one.

## Comprehension

### LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITY 1

#### **Units 1-7: The Trans-Alaska Pipeline**

The Alaska pipeline brings oil from the north to the Gulf of Alaska. The big pipe snakes up hills and through gaps in the mountains. The pipe ends at the Gulf of Alaska. There is a spot with docks for ships. Pumps send the oil to the tanks in the ships. Then tugs help the big ships glide past rocks. They end up in safe spots in the Gulf.

#### **Units 8-14: Camping and Fishing in Alaska**

In June, people camp and fish in Alaska. People can get to Alaska by plane. Then they can hike to the best spots to fish. They can pitch a tent on the shore of a lake and make a fire to cook the fish they catch. If they catch lots of fish, they can hang them next to the fire. There they can smoke the fish and then bring them home. The fish will last a long time.

### LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITY 2

#### **Units 1-7: Sliding Ice**

A glacier is made of snow—a lot of snow. When the snow cannot melt, more snow piles on top, then more and more. When the pile of snow is thick, it will press down. The snow gets like ice. Then the pile slides downhill an inch at a time. At the end, a big chunk can split off and make an iceberg.

**Units 8-14: Speeding Glaciers**

A scientist can tell how fast a glacier can slide. A rock or stone on the glacier will slide past a stake in the sand. Scientists can use a clock to tell how fast the ice slides past. They can track the length of time it takes the glacier to pass the stake. They can tell us when the glacier will get to the sea and melt.

**LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 1-7: Swimming Upstream**

Salmon are an ocean fish. But, when it is time to lay eggs, salmon must swim up a swift river. They cannot rest. On and on they swim to the spot where they lay their eggs. Afterwards, the salmon cannot get back to the ocean. They have lost all their strength. The river becomes their grave.

**Units 8-14: Where the Buffalo Roam**

The buffalo is almost extinct. In years past, herds of buffalo roamed the plains. Native Americans killed only the number of buffalo they needed to survive. They thought of the splendid beasts as a gift of life. Then people came from the East. They killed millions of buffalo just for their hides.

**LEVEL 1 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 1-7: A Hero**

Roberto Clemente was a wonderful athlete and a hero. His Puerto Rican parents showed him how to work hard. They also taught him to respect others. He came to the U.S. to play baseball. But he was not always treated with respect. He spoke up for the rights of all Latinos. He also dreamed of founding a sports camp for poor boys. Sadly, he was killed in a plane crash at the age of 38. He was getting supplies to people in need. After his death, his wife carried out his dream.

**Units 8-14: A Thinker Who Couldn't Talk or Walk**

What can you do if you can't talk or walk? Stephen Hawking had a disease that made speaking and walking very difficult. But he could still think about many things. When did the universe begin? How did it begin? Will it ever end? He used special machines to write and speak. He was known worldwide as one of the greatest thinkers of our time.

**LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITY 1****Units 1-7: Animal Tricksters**

It's no secret. Animals sometimes trick each other. Why? One reason is that being deceptive can help them catch prey. Anglerfish live in the deep sea. Dangling from their heads is a built-in fishing rod. At the tip is bait: a lump that looks like food. When an angler is hungry, it jiggles the fake bait in front of its mouth. Snap! A nearby fish ends up as an angler's meal. Fireflies flash on summer evenings. Each kind of firefly has its own flash pattern so they can find each other. Some female fireflies can imitate the pattern of another kind of firefly. When a male responds, he finds out there is no mate. The female eats him instead! Animals are deceptive, sure. But do they really lie? An angler's fake fishing rod is an inborn trait. A firefly's tricky flashes are instinct. One thing seems clear—being tricky can give you an edge in nature.



**Units 8-14: Animal Dances**

Unlike humans, animals don't communicate with words. They can't say, "Look what I found!" or "This is my spot." Instead, they send messages with smells, sounds, and even dance. Their dances share information, defend territories, and attract mates. A bee returns to the beehive from an apple orchard. Worker bees swarm her like a rockstar. She moves in a line, vibrates her wings, and waggles. Her movements give a flight plan. Her waggle length tells where the flowers are. Its angle tells workers how to get there. Some animals use dance for a different reason. How do they decide who gets a mate, or the best spot? They have a dance-off. A betta fish circles an intruder. One flares its neck. The other responds. Both beat the water with their tails. One backs down and swims away. Many animals move in special ways. But no other animal dances like humans: for fun!

**LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITY 2****Units 1-7: Plane Wings That Flap**

Plane wings that flap like a bird? That couldn't work, could it? From the beginning, animals influenced aircraft design. Even today, their amazing traits help them outperform most planes. Today's plane wings are rigid. They have small flaps that move on hinges. These flaps help the plane lift off, fly, and land. Unfortunately, they also make movement clunky. Bird wings are better and smoother at controlling flight. So, engineers are copying birds to make wings that flex in any direction. Copying animals and plants when inventing is called biomimicry. A group of engineers recently developed a wing similar to the bones, cartilage, and feathers of bird wings. Another group has a different bird-inspired idea. They're testing wing-parts built with materials that "remember" and change shapes at different temperatures. These wings wouldn't need electricity or hinges. They could adjust their shape and flap on their own!

**Units 8-14: Velcro From a Plant**

Engineers are problem solvers who invent. What inspires them? Some study nature. Making inventions similar to nature is called biomimicry. If you've worn Velcro® shoes, thank a plant and an engineer! In 1941, an engineer named George de Mestral went hiking with his dog. He noticed that spiky objects, called burrs, were sticking to his clothes and his dog. He was curious: Why were the burrs so sticky? He examined the burrs. There were hundreds of tiny hooks! The hooks stuck into clothing and objects. This gave de Mestral an idea. He invented a fastener with two strips of fabric. He put thousands of tiny hooks on one side. He put loops on the other side. The two sides stick when pressed together. They make a ripping sound when pulled apart. This engineer started a company to produce the fasteners. The invention is Velcro®. It's still used on shoes, clothing, and many other products!

**LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 1-7: A Forest Adventure**

In the forests of Malaysia, you can find a one-of-a-kind theme park. It combines nature and adventure. Are you ready for a visit? Like all theme parks, this one has a focus: playing in nature. You can climb trees, leap into rivers, and jump from branches. The park set a record for the longest water slide in the world. Riders can enjoy looking at the trees around them as they go down the slide. The park was built reusing old materials. For example, old boats are used as picnic tables! That way, no trees needed to be cut down for wood. Sim Choo Kheng founded the theme park. It reminds him of playing in nature as a child. Kheng believes it is important to enjoy the benefits of nature and to respect it.

**Units 8-14: Bicycles in Bogotá**

¡Bienvenido a Bogotá! Welcome to Bogotá! If you like to ride bikes, this city in Colombia is for you. That's because Bogotá has more than 350 miles of bike paths! People in Bogotá know that biking has many benefits. Using bikes can help limit traffic and reduce air pollution. Bikes also help people get moving. Bogotá has developed something called a bike share. Anyone can rent a bike to explore the city. Then, they return the bike when they are done. There are bikes available for people with different abilities. People can use their arms, instead of their legs, to power these bikes. Every Sunday morning, Bogotá closes some of its roads to vehicles. People can ride bikes or jog safely away from traffic.

**LEVEL 2 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 1-7: Glaciers in Greenland**

Do you want to see one of the world's largest glaciers? Visit Ilulissat, Greenland! Ilulissat (ill-OO-lee-sat) means "iceberg" in Greenland's language. In Ilulissat, there is a body of water with floating ice and icebergs. The icebergs can be as tall as skyscrapers! The Ilulissat Visitor Centre was constructed to look like a snowy owl. Visitors can walk on a path to see the beautiful landscape. Moving and melting glaciers are noisy! Visitors can listen to real sounds from the ice and picture being on a glacier. The building was made to show people how crucial it is to care for our planet.

**Units 8-14: A Path Through the Clouds**

Ever wondered what it feels like to walk in the clouds? Come explore Sky Bridge 721. It is the longest hanging bridge in the world! Sky Bridge 721 is in the Czech ("check") Republic. Many people came together to construct this amazing bridge. To get to the bridge, there are two options: a hiking trail and a chairlift ride. Either way, a dazzling view of the landscape is waiting. It takes courage to reach the end of Sky Bridge 721. The path is a half mile long and very high above the ground! As visitors cross through the clouds, they can see mountains all around. The walk gives people a moment to admire nature.

**LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 1****Units 1-7: Change Champions**

A lot of the time, single-use plastics, like plastic bags, are used once and thrown away. These kinds of bags are common and can create waste. Isabel and Melati Wijsen saw how plastic pollution made an impact on their community on the island of Bali. The sisters wanted to make a change. Isabel and Melati created a group to urge people to stop using plastic bags. "We already had a strong connection to the environment," Melati explains. After years of hard work, the group succeeded. Bali's governor decided to ban the bags. Shops could no longer offer plastic bags. That was just the beginning. Isabel and Melati have worked to draw attention to the impact of plastic on the environment worldwide. Melati hopes more teens will be inspired to speak up. "You have a voice, so use it," she says.

**Units 8-14: Reed High Eco Warriors**

The Reed High Eco Warriors fought to protect natural resources in their community. Led by Celeste Tinajero, they won. Celeste's work as a champion for the environment started in an unlikely place: the school toilets. The school's leaking sinks and outdated toilets were wasting water. Celeste saw an opportunity for change. The Eco Warriors won a grant to install new sinks and toilets that use less water. They also added automatic lights and air-powered hand dryers. Celeste was ready to tackle another issue: pollution. She focused on single-use plastic water bottles. Celeste helped raise money to install "hydration stations" in school. Students were able to use refillable water bottles instead of plastic. Celeste continued her mission as a young adult. She studied education and environmental science at a local university. After she graduated, Celeste became a teacher. She hopes to inspire a new generation of environmental champions.



## LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 1-7: A Smart Sprinkler

When Adarsh Ambati was 13 years old, he noticed something odd. The frogs in the nearby river stopped croaking, and green grass was turning brown. He knew his town in California was going through a drought, or a long period without rain. Still, it was the first time he'd seen these effects.

Adarsh researched the problem. Though his family conserved water, others in his community often forgot to turn off their sprinklers. Adarsh was inspired to design a special sprinkler system. The sprinklers can sense moisture levels in the soil. They gather data about weather. They also check the community's rules about water use. Adarsh's "smart" sprinkler system combines all of this information. Then, it tells people when they can use sprinklers. Now, people can conserve water and save money. Adarsh has some advice for teens who want to fix big problems. "Stay focused," he says. "Then think of ways to engineer solutions."

### Units 8-14: Clean Rivers, Clean Oceans

When Boyan Slat saw more plastic bags than fish while scuba diving, he began asking questions. Boyan researched ocean pollution. He was shocked by what he discovered. Every year, millions of tons of plastic are produced around the world. Much of that plastic ends up in the ocean. Boyan had a plan. He designed a way to trap plastic so it could be removed from the ocean. He first used this system to collect plastic and other waste in an area of the Pacific Ocean called the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. This solution worked, but Boyan wasn't finished. He wanted to tackle ocean pollution at its source: rivers. Boyan invented a new technology. His machine cleans up plastic from rivers before it even reaches the ocean. What's next? Scientists and environmental groups are working together. The goal is to use Boyan's invention in polluted rivers around the world.

## LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 1-7: Disappearing Birds

Gabriela McCall Delgado liked to look at birds near her home in Puerto Rico. Still, she never thought of herself as a true bird watcher. Then, Gabriela noticed that the birds were disappearing. Why? Nearby, more and more buildings were being constructed where birds had once lived. Without their homes, many birds died off. Gabriela began photographing the birds that were left. She worked with biologists to keep track of the birds she found. Gabriela didn't stop there. She created a guidebook and a game for children to show what happens when birds lose their habitats. Gabriela shared these materials with schools and libraries to teach others what she had learned. "If you don't have children interested in the environment, the environmental movement has no future," says Gabriela. Gabriela's efforts made a difference. A large area of land where she lives is now protected for wildlife, including birds.

### Units 8-14: Bring the Plants Back

Every day on her way to school in Mumbai, India, Aadya Joshi walked past an area filled with abandoned cars. Why wasn't anyone putting this land to good use? At age 15, Aadya decided she could launch the change she wanted to see. She turned the open area of land into a garden. The garden she created was not just any garden. Aadya planted native plants. These plants are from the area of India where she lives. The native plants in the garden provided food and habitats for local insects and other animals from that area. Three years later, Aadya started a big project. Her goal was to educate people about how native plants are important for wildlife. "The way to fix the habitat isn't just to plant any tree," Aadya says. "It's to make sure you replace what was torn down from that spot."



## LEVEL 3 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-7: A Human-Powered Phone Charger

Lino Marrero couldn't call home to ask for a ride after practice. His phone battery was dead. Then Lino remembered learning about kinetic energy. Moving objects, like a rolling ball or a running person, have kinetic energy. "What if I could use the energy I have on the field to charge my phone?" Lino thought. That moment led Lino to think of a new strategy for creating power. He invented a new kind of battery. It uses kinetic energy. Lino's innovative battery fits into a shoe. It collects energy from walking or running. The battery's energy can power a phone or even a lightbulb. Lino thinks it could be less expensive than other sources of energy. Lino explains, "I just want to inspire more people to want to become inventors and help change the world."

### Units 8-14: Many People, One Goal

Michelle and Jeremy Muchilwa are from Kisumu, Kenya. The siblings attended a virtual camp where they learned how to reduce pollution. The camp stressed one important strategy: get people to work together. The Muchilwa siblings' goal was to pick up plastic waste in nearby Lake Victoria. They needed local marine scientists to work with them. "We were so shy because we didn't think they were going to help us," Jeremy says. "When we were welcomed, we were so shocked. They were so kind and helped us so much." Michelle and Jeremy still needed more people to help reach their goal. They came up with an innovative solution. They created an app to show pollution on a map. With the app, anyone can easily find plastic to clean up in Lake Victoria. "When you are coming up with solutions, you need to have people talk to one another," Michelle says. "Everyone can solve a problem."

## LEVEL 3 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: Day of the Monarchs

Monarch butterflies have a special meaning on Día de Muertos. Día de Muertos is a big holiday in Mexico every November. Around this time, monarch butterflies fly to Mexico. Monarch butterflies are said to bring the spirits of the ancestors. They help us remember those who have lived before us. Día de Muertos celebrates new life. Yet, it also reminds us to pay respect to those no longer with us. Monarch butterflies tell us that life moves forward and brings about new things.

### Skill Check: Digging for History

A paleontologist studies prehistoric plants and animals from thousands of years ago. Digging for dinosaur fossils, or bones, is an exciting part of the job. But, there is a certain way to dig. Paleontologists use a brush to dust away sand. They tap the ground with a metal pick. It sounds different when a metal pick taps a rock and when it taps a dinosaur fossil. Paleontologists know the difference. They must be gentle. They need to remove the sand to see the fossil. However, the sand could be holding the fossil together!

## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 1-7: Believe in Yourself

Terina Allen is a career expert. Read to learn her words of wisdom about self-confidence. You'll find them everywhere: well-intentioned people with an opinion about your career path. Some will cheer you on as you find your way. Others will try to steer you onto a path that doesn't interest you. Your biggest challenge will be to believe in yourself. When I was younger, I struggled. I had dreams of becoming a teacher or business

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administrator. I knew I needed a university degree, but I had stopped believing in myself. Then someone on my school's staff cheered me on. He told me three key things. One, if you don't believe in yourself, it will be hard to get anyone else to believe in you. Two, never let other people's inability to see your brilliance stop you from being brilliant. And three, despite life's obstacles, persevere to shape the future you want. Even now, I remind myself that I have a bright future.

### **Units 8-14: Keep Believing**

Terina Allen, a career expert, shares advice for choosing your career path and believing in yourself. What happens when you prefer a career path that others don't support? You might feel pressured to do something different. This pressure can cause you to doubt yourself. This doesn't happen only when you're a kid. It can also happen after you start working as an adult. Early in my career, I was giving a talk. A person in the audience shouted out to me that I had made a good career choice. He said I had a bright future. This positive feedback came at the right time. I was dealing with self-doubt. Even now, I experience success and failure. I remind myself that I have a bright future. You have a bright future ahead. Remind yourself of your talents and interests. Explore careers that fascinate you. Have courage- and above all, believe in yourself.

## **LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 2**

### **Units 1-7: At Your Service**

Do you like being around food and people? Are you a problem-solver? Being a restaurant manager might be the career for you. Meet Juan Perez. He didn't always want to be in the restaurant industry. He went to college to study business. While in school, he had a part-time job as a dishwasher. He worked his way up in the kitchen and became a manager. That's when he fell in love with the restaurant industry. Perez has worked at fine-dining restaurants and a golf club. After that, he became a manager. He manages four rock-and-roll-themed restaurants. Here are some of Perez's areas of focus as a restaurant manager. Every day, the manager checks the building to make sure equipment is working, health and safety standards are met, and that food is properly prepared. The manager also oversees the budget and makes sure employees, suppliers, and bills are paid on time. These are just some of the responsibilities Perez manages every day.

### **Units 8-14: Managing Expectations**

Want to know more about being a restaurant manager? Juan Perez shares what he is responsible for in this career and the skills he needs. The manager supervises staff. He makes sure they're trained and builds positive relationships with them. The manager helps make sure customers are happy with their visit. If a customer is upset about the order or service, the manager helps solve the problem. Restaurant managers have to be ready to lend a hand. When a restaurant gets busy, a good manager will help out. Every day is different. Sometimes, things run smoothly. But, sometimes, you work long hours, or on your day off. You have to stay flexible. Any job is more fun when you like where you work. Perez enjoys a family-friendly place and the customers he sees each week. If you think restaurant management is for you, start as a host. You'll interact with people, learn time management, work with staff, and discover how restaurants flow.



## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 1-7: Sports Talk

Priya Desai is a journalist but used to be a sports broadcaster. She shares how she got into this career. Growing up, I always wanted to be a journalist. I just didn't know what kind. But I knew I was ready to work hard. I got my hustle from my immigrant parents. They left everything to come to a new country and built a life from nothing. I also got from them the idea that if there's a will, there's a way. You have to figure out how to get what you want and be fearless. In college, I saw sports broadcasting and said, "I want to do that!" I wrote for the paper. After that, I worked in smaller cities and then New York. My first assignment was to cover a professional baseball player coming to the New York Mets. People ask if I was nervous in that interview. Yes. I was one of very few women at media events. I told myself, "I belong here."

### Units 8-14: Reaching People

Priya Desai is a journalist. She explains more about sports media. The hardest part of being a broadcaster is that you work all the time. Once U.S. football starts, there are no weekends. If you like journalism, you better like homework. In sports, you can reach people who don't read the news every day. There's so much going on in our culture. A lot of the news is hard to grasp. Sports news bridges that gap. For example, you can learn about what it means to be part of a union through a baseball strike. I prepared for this career when I was young by reading. That's the advice I give to people who want to write or go into broadcasting. You have to know how to write. To be a good writer, you have to learn from the great writers. I've read fiction and nonfiction from a young age. Reading has always been part of my life. I also joined writing clubs in school.

## LEVEL 4 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 1-7: Twists and Turns

Finding a job that is close to your interests makes work fun! Larry Chickola is the head company engineer of Six Flags® theme parks. He shares why he loves his job. I've always loved theme parks. Growing up, I would visit Cedar Point® amusement park in Ohio. That's where I first rode the Corkscrew roller coaster. It was awesome. I dreamed of becoming an engineer, and studied mechanical engineering in college. It didn't occur to me that I could design roller coasters for a living. Then, a friend told me about a job at Six Flags: roller coaster engineer. I jumped at the opportunity. I supervise the design and construction of Six Flags rides around the world. In North America, there are over 1,000 rides in these parks, including 157 roller coasters. Our engineers designed one of the tallest, fastest, and longest roller coasters ever built! It's called Falcon's Flight and is the main attraction at Six Flags in Saudi Arabia.

### Units 8-14: Thrilling Rides

What makes a ride fun? Roller Coaster Engineer, Larry Chickola, explains how his job involves creativity and problem-solving. I often walk around the Six Flags® park near my office. I like to observe visitors and think about what makes a ride fun for them. If I want a ride to be fast or tall, I can do that. But what does it mean to make a ride fun? Finding that answer is the hardest part of my job. There are some roller coasters I'm very proud to have designed. One is the Iron Rattler. It is surrounded by beautiful rock walls. You look at the rocks as the coaster goes up, and then you drop almost straight down. I also work to make roller coasters accessible to people with disabilities. I helped install a system to make rides inclusive. I'm happy my rides can bring thrills to Six Flags visitors every day.



## LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 2-3: A Common Food

We eat them baked. We eat them boiled. We eat them fried, mashed, and sliced thin. What are they? Potatoes! Potatoes are a common food in many parts of the world.

#### The Beginnings of Potatoes

Long ago, potato plants grew in only one place. That place was high in the Andes Mountains of South America. Over time, people of the Andes began to grow their own potatoes instead of gathering the wild plants. For thousands of years, Andean farmers grew potatoes for food.

#### Explorers Spread Potatoes

Then, in the 1500s, explorers from Spain came to the Andes. They saw how potatoes were planted, grown, and eaten. They had never seen them before. The explorers brought potatoes back to Europe.

#### Potatoes Are Poison?

At first, many people in Europe did not want to eat potatoes. They thought the lumpy things looked strange. They thought the food had poison in it. In fact, the plant parts that grow above ground are poisonous. But the plump parts we call potatoes grow underground and are full of nutrition. Today potatoes are very popular. How do you like to eat your potatoes?

### Units 4-5: Money

We use money to buy things and pay people for their work. Countries have a system for using coins and paper money. People agree on the value of the coins and bills used in their country. Thousands of years ago, there was no money. People used things like cows or bags of salt to make payments. A problem with this form of payment was that cows and bags of salt could be different sizes. There was no agreement about the value of these items. Another problem was that this kind of payment was hard to carry from place to place. The money we use today is easy to carry. You can put it in your pocket. Have you ever tried to put a cow in your pocket?

## LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2-3: Babysitting

Simpson was the two-year-old son of Cynthia's neighbor. This evening, she would babysit him for the first time. It was also her first time babysitting for pay. But Cynthia felt prepared because she had babysat her younger brother many, many times. How hard could this job be?

After his parents left, Simpson let out a cry as loud as a fire alarm. He dropped to the floor and kicked his feet in the air. Cynthia reached out to give Simpson a comforting hug, but he kicked her and screamed even louder. Tears pumped from his eyes. He can't keep it up much longer, Cynthia told herself.

But Simpson kept it up. The sound of his screaming seemed to make him scream more. What lung power! Cynthia thought, and that made her remember Mr. Herbert, the director of the school choir. He had told Cynthia to remember lung power before she performed a solo.

Cynthia's ears hurt from Simpson's screaming. She breathed deeply, opened her mouth, and let out the highest note she had sung from her solo. AAAAAAAH! The note seemed to fill the whole room. Simpson turned to watch her. Cynthia sang another note, and another, as loudly as if performing in a giant hall. Simpson's loud cries changed to sobs, then silence. Cynthia thought, This job is not hard at all.



**Units 4-5: The Boy and the Almonds**

One day a boy saw a jar of almonds sitting on the kitchen table. Because he was very hungry, he stuck his hand in the jar and grabbed a big handful of almonds. When he tried to take his hand out of the jar, he could not. He stood there pulling and pulling. No luck! His hand was completely stuck. He began to cry. His mother came and told him to grab half as many almonds. He dropped his big handful of almonds and then grabbed half as many. His hand and the almonds came out of the jar instantly.

**LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 2-3: Building with Plastic Bottles**

What should we do with used plastic bottles? We should recycle them. That way, the plastic can be used again. But too many people just throw away plastic bottles. Plastic bottles end up in streams and oceans. They cause harm to living things. To end the waste and harm, people have come up with interesting ideas. People are actually building houses with plastic bottles.

**Building Houses in Panama**

Robert Bezeau lives in the Central American country of Panama. He worried about the harm caused by plastic trash. He wanted to do something about the problem. He began building an unusual village. The houses do not look unusual, but they are made of plastic bottles. The bottles are stacked inside frames. They are hidden between the outside and inside walls. Plastic bottles are great for building. The air inside the empty bottles stops heat from passing through. Panama can be very hot, but these houses feel cool. And if an earthquake happens, the walls can bend. They won't fall on the people inside.

**Building Houses in Algeria**

The African country of Algeria includes a hot desert. Here, in a refugee camp, an engineer built a house for his grandmother. It was made of plastic bottles filled with sand. Under the desert sun, the house felt very comfortable. People liked the houses. The engineer has built more of them. Each is made of about 6,000 bottles.

**Building Houses in Other Countries**

Buildings made of plastic bottles are found in other countries, too. Builders have found great ways to reduce plastic trash. They provide homes by recycling.

**Units 4-5: Rabbits**

Rabbits are citizens of the world. That means you can find them everywhere. Rabbits have many interesting features. They are usually silent animals but not always. Most rabbits make a loud thump with their foot as a warning to other rabbits when there is danger. Some may scream when frightened. There are different names for rabbits. The male is called a buck. The female is a doe. Baby rabbits are called kittens or kits. Rabbits' teeth continue to grow throughout their whole lives. Daily chewing keeps their teeth at usable lengths. Rabbits chew anything—plants, tree bark, carrots, and furniture.

**LEVEL 5 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 2-3: The Statue**

There were several statues in the park near Julia's home. Julia's favorite one was of Sonny Grimes, a musician of the early 1900s. Grimes had grown up right here in Boltonville, and the town showed its pride by having a statue made of him.

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Julia liked the statue because it looked so natural. Grimes was sitting on a rock holding his guitar. He wore a floppy hat, and under his wide mustache, he had a happy grin. Julia liked to sit on a bench nearby. She just enjoyed looking at the statue and picturing the musician performing. The sculptor had done an excellent job of making Sonny Grimes look like a real person.

One day while Julia was staring at the statue, she frowned because something seemed to be different about it. "I shaved my mustache," said a man's voice, "because it was itchy." Julia looked closely at Sonny Grimes. His mustache was gone! Suddenly, the statue's fingers were moving over the guitar. His mouth opened. He sang, "Lonely days, lonely nights—so long." The music sounded sweet and sad. Julia had never heard the song before.

The song ended. Julia saw that Sonny Grimes was the same statue he had always been. He even had his mustache. "I must have been dreaming," Julia said to herself. That evening, Julia searched for information about Sonny Grimes. She found a video clip of him performing in 1935. He was strumming his guitar and singing. As she listened to the song, Julia gasped. Sonny Grimes sang in a sweet, sad voice, "Lonely days, lonely nights—so long."

### Units 4-5: The Wolf and the Shepherd

Day after day, a wolf visited a flock of sheep in a peaceful meadow that was being tended by a shepherd. Each day the shepherd watched the wolf carefully to make sure he did not carry away a little lamb. But day after day, the wolf only watched. It seemed as if he was helping the shepherd take care of the sheep. The shepherd grew so used to seeing the wolf that he forgot that the wolf could do harm to the flock. One day he left the flock to run an errand, and when he returned, many of the flock had been carried away. It was then that he knew how foolish he had been to trust a wolf.

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 2-3: Two Sisters

I'll tell you a tale about something that happened right here in mountain country. It happened long, long ago, when the only folks around here were giants. Two of the giants were sisters, and they couldn't get along.

The giant sisters were always arguing. They argued about who had the louder voice. They argued about who was stronger and who was taller. They argued about who was better at whatever they were arguing about. One day, they decided to race up Stone Mountain to see who was faster. They reached the top at the very same moment. But they began arguing about who got there first. Their voices were so loud and annoying that Stone Mountain himself woke up.

"Quiet down!" Stone Mountain warned. "Or I'll make you quiet." The sisters quieted. But in less than a minute, they started arguing again. Their argument grew so fierce that they grabbed each other by the shoulders and shook, shook, shook. Stone Mountain couldn't let that continue. In an instant, he turned both giant sisters into stone.

And there they are today. Take a look at Stone Mountain. Just below the top, you'll see two stone giants holding each other by the shoulders. They're called the Two Sisters, and they're locked in argument forever.

### Units 4-5: Can You Believe It?

Alone on the playground after school, Truman and Desi were shooting baskets. Truman kept missing. "I'm off my game today," he said. "Last week I made six 3-pointers in a row."

Desi looked at him with suspicion as he made an easy shot. Truman tried a shot, too, but the ball didn't even hit the backboard.

"I'm not a liar," said Truman, though he had not actually made those six 3-point baskets. He had made two. He felt as proud of them as if he had made six.

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"Nobody called you a liar," said Desi. "But admit it—you do tend to ... um ... stretch the truth a lot. Suppose you really did something great. Nobody would believe you."

Truman admitted that he did exaggerate. But he was just trying to make the truth more interesting. After Desi left to go home, Truman tried a few free throws, but missed them all. He headed out of the playground. Suddenly, for no reason, he turned to face the playground and threw the ball with all his might. The ball soared over the chain-link fence, over the swing set, into the basketball court ... and dropped right through the hoop.

Truman yelled, "Did you see that??!!" He looked around wildly to find a witness to his unbelievable shot. But he was all alone.

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2-3: Birds-of-Paradise

The island of New Guinea lies in the South Pacific Ocean. The island's forests are home to amazing birds called birds-of-paradise. There are around 40 species, or kinds. Birds-of-paradise look and act like no other birds on earth.

#### Feathers of the Male Birds-of-Paradise

Many have brightly colored feathers. The feathers flash yellow, blue, red, and green among the trees. The feathers of some birds-of-paradise change colors in the light. Some birds grow extra-long quills. The quills look like wires with button tips. The quills dangle and bounce. Some birds have tail, neck, or head feathers that can open like fans. These strange, beautiful birds-of-paradise are all males.

#### Actions of the Male Birds-of-Paradise

The male birds don't just sit around waiting to be noticed. They sing and dance, too. They have some remarkable dance moves. They sway and spin. They leap and puff out their feathers. They make their bodies change shape. They hang upside down from branches. Some even clear an area of the forest floor to use as a stage.

#### Female Birds-of-Paradise

Female birds-of-paradise are much plainer than the male bird. A female gets to choose which male bird to mate with. The showiest males have a better chance of being chosen.

### Units 4-5: Kangaroos

Kangaroos live only in Australia but are known around the world. Kangaroos jump as a way of moving from one place to another. The average jumping speed is about 14 miles per hour. They jump using their tails and hind legs. There are different names for kangaroos. Males are called bucks, boomers, or jacks. Females are called does, flyers, or jills. A group of kangaroos is called a mob. A mob is made up of about 10 kangaroos. Living in a mob is a way kangaroos protect themselves from predators.

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 2-3: Anansi and Common Sense

Long ago, Anansi came up with a plan for gaining power and wealth. He would gather up all the common sense in the world! Then only he would have common sense, and everyone else would have to pay him for advice. Anansi would be rich!

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So Anansi traveled the world carrying a giant sack. He collected every bit of common sense and put it into the sack. He decided to hide the sack at the top of a tall tree.

Anansi used a rope to tie the sack around his belly. As he climbed the tree, the sack kept banging against his belly. He had trouble climbing because it was getting in his way. Then Anansi heard the voice of a young boy. "Why are you climbing with the sack on your belly?" the boy called up from the base of the tree. "That's so foolish! Just move the sack so that it's on your back. Then you can climb easily."

When Anansi heard that advice, he knew that he had failed to collect all the common sense in the world. Angriily, he untied the sack and threw it on the ground. It broke apart. The wind lifted the bits of common sense and carried them off. They all landed here and there around the world. And that is why everyone has a little bit of common sense, but nobody has it all."

### Units 4-5: Fortune Telling

One morning, Adam and his friend Miguel wandered among the booths set up for the school fundraising fair. Miguel said, "Look, there's Ms. Sharpe dressed up like a fortune teller." Ms. Sharpe was the school guidance counselor. She was wearing a wig and shawl. She sat at a table with a crystal ball on it. "Let's see if she can tell our fortunes," Miguel said.

Adam thought it was ridiculous! Nobody could see into the future. But he agreed to pay to have his fortune told. The money would support school programs. Ms. Sharpe asked Adam how far into the future he would like to look. She spoke with an odd accent that made him giggle. This was too silly! Adam told her he wanted to know what would happen that very afternoon. He didn't want to wait long to prove how ridiculous fortune-telling was.

"I will look into my crystal ball," said the phony fortune teller. She waved her hands over the ball and stared into it. "This afternoon ... let me look closer. Oh, indeed, hmmm ... you will experience an unexpected event." Adam nodded, but his smile showed his doubt.

That afternoon, when Adam got home, his mother greeted him with a huge smile. His uncle Ray had arrived that afternoon. He was supposed to come the next week but his plans changed at the last minute. Adam's mother said, "An unexpected treat!" Adam froze. Ridiculous, he thought. It's just chance... isn't it?"

## LEVEL 6 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2-3: The Eiffel Tower

In the 1880s, the government of France began planning a World's Fair. The fair would be held in the capital city of Paris.

#### Reasons for the Tower

World's Fairs were big, important events. At a World's Fair, nations set up exhibits. They showed off their products, inventions, and art. The planners of the fair wanted to build a grand tower. It would show the skill of French engineers. It would be the center of attention in Paris. The planners held a contest to choose the tower to build.

#### Design of the Tower

There were hundreds of contest entries. The planners chose one tower. The winning design came from Gustave Eiffel's building company. The tower would be made of iron. It would rise 300 meters (984 feet). That was taller than any structure ever built. And its top would be lit in the most modern way—with electric lights!

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### Reactions to the Tower

Many people in Paris objected to it. It looked like an ugly machine to them. They called it “useless and monstrous.” But others defended the tower. They saw beauty in its lines and shapes. The World’s Fair was held in 1889. The tower was a big success. Two million visitors rode to the top in elevators. The fair’s buildings were torn down when the fair ended. But the tower was left standing. It remains the center of attention and is the most famous landmark in Paris. The Eiffel Tower is a symbol of the city and of France.

### Units 4-5: Slippers are Stupendous

They slip right on your feet. That’s how they got the name slippers. There are benefits to wearing them. Slippers protect your feet and footwear. Wearing slippers means no splinters in your bare feet. Wear slippers and you won’t wear out your shoes or socks. Slippers are helpful in keeping your house clean. Shoes spread dirt everywhere. Slippers don’t pick up the dirt from the streets. And, slippers keep you and your feet healthy. They keep your feet warm. They guard against athlete’s foot, leaving your feet itch-free.

## LEVEL 6 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: Painting Her Life

Frida Kahlo is one of the most famous painters. She did sketch a lot as a child, but never intended to be a painter. Kahlo’s dream was to become a doctor instead. Sadly, those life plans changed due to one very scary day.

When Kahlo was eighteen years old, she got on a bus to go home from school. Then Kahlo remembered that she had left her umbrella somewhere. She got off the bus to look for it. Later that day, she boarded another bus. A few minutes into the trip, disaster struck. The bus driver tried to pass a streetcar but did not make it in time. The streetcar crashed into Kahlo’s side of the bus.

Kahlo was in the hospital for a month then in bed for months at home. She grew extremely sad. She knew she couldn’t be a doctor with her health so poor. Kahlo began to draw and paint to pass the time. She poured all her emotions into her paintings. There was a mirror by her bed, so she began to make paintings of her face. These self-portraits showed a stoic and thoughtful Kahlo staring at the viewer. Though she showed little expression, one could see her inner strength.

Kahlo painted over a hundred paintings. “The Two Fridas” is a very popular one. It has two self-portraits in a single painting. And shockingly, it shows two bleeding hearts and a pair of scissors! It captures the pain that she experienced. This is something that many viewers might relate to. Years later and long after her lifetime, Kahlo’s intense self-portraits live on.

### Skill Check: The Surprise

Azad sat in the back seat as his mother drove down Fern Street. Uncle Cyrus had recently moved, and this was the first time they were visiting him at the new house.

When they arrived, Uncle Cyrus eagerly showed them around the house, taking them from room to room. Then Uncle Cyrus motioned out the living room window and said, “And there’s the garden. It’s not much now, but I’m excited to transform it completely.”

As Azad peered out the window, he spotted steps that led down to the garden.

“Uncle, how do you go down to the garden in your wheelchair?” Azad asked, motioning to the steps.

“I go around and use the side gate instead,” Uncle Cyrus commented.

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Azad knew how important his uncle's garden was to him. In fact, he distinctly remembered how sad Uncle Cyrus was when he had to part ways with the beautiful garden at his old house. So on their next visit, Azad waited until Uncle Cyrus left for his weekly pickleball match and prepared a surprise.

"Uncle, can you come with me to the garden for a surprise, please?" Azad asked once his uncle returned a few hours later.

"Sure, Azad," Uncle Cyrus said and started wheeling to the front door to use the side gate.

"Actually, part of the surprise is that you don't have to go all the way around anymore," Azad replied excitedly. "My mother helped me build a ramp in the garden. Come see!"

Uncle Cyrus's eyes widened, and he swiftly followed Azad. Sure enough, there was a wooden ramp now where the steps used to be. Uncle Cyrus cheered and quickly wheeled himself down the ramp. Tears sprang to his eyes, and he gave Azad a hug.

"This is wonderful. Thank you, Azad! Now I have a surprise for you too!" Uncle Cyrus said as he wheeled toward the corner of the garden.

There, behind some bushes, Azad saw a pot with bright blue flowers. Azad loved blue!

"These are called hydrangeas. I saw them and was reminded of you," Uncle Cyrus said. "Will you help me plant them before you go?"

Azad eagerly agreed. As they planted the beautiful flowers, Azad saw his uncle smile.

## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: Eight-Eyed Hunter

A hairy, eight-legged creature is crawling across the ground. Its eight eyes see sharply. Its bite releases venom that can kill. Is this a fictional creature from a horror movie? No, it's real. Should you run away? No, it isn't hunting for human prey. This creature is a common kind of spider, often called a wolf spider. Keep reading to discover what makes the wolf spider unique.

#### Hunting

Unlike web-spinning spiders, wolf spiders do not spin sticky webs to trap insects. Instead, wolf spiders go out hunting. The wolf spider's eight eyes help it pick out insects. The spider creeps toward its prey. As it comes within striking distance, it speeds up. It pounces! Instantly, it pierces its victim with its big, hairy fangs and releases its venom. This behavior is the reason these hunters are called wolf spiders.

#### Mating

Male wolf spiders must approach females with great caution. Otherwise, they might be taken as prey and get eaten by the females. Some male wolf spiders wave their front legs and feelers. The waving seems to signal, "See? I'm not food!" Other males deliver a gift of a captured fly. While the female munches on the treat, the male comes close enough to mate. Female wolf spiders then lay dozens of eggs.

#### Mothering

Wolf spiders use silk from their bodies to enclose their eggs in a sac. Most female spiders do that. But unlike other female spiders, wolf spider mothers do not die after making the egg sac. Instead, the female attaches the sac to her body. When the eggs hatch, the mother protects the spiderlings by carrying them around on her back. When they are able to spin special threads, the spiderlings leave. They climb to high places to launch themselves

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into the breeze and start new lives.

So if you happen to run into a wolf spider, remember that it's not as scary as it looks. It might just be giving its babies a piggyback ride.

### **Unit 8: Fruits Rock!**

Fruits are amazing in many ways. Fruits are healthful. They have vitamins. They reduce the risk of disease. Fruits are plentiful. There are between 1,000 and 2,000 different kinds. They make up a large part of farming production. Fruits are not just for eating. Some fruits can be used as natural dyes. Bayberries can be used to make candles.

### **Unit 9: Whoa, Hold Your Seahorses!**

They have a tail and a head that looks somewhat like a horse. They live in the sea. So, seahorse is not a totally unexpected name for this unique fish that is found in seas around the world. Seahorses are bony fish that do not have scales like other fish. Their bodies are covered with a thin skin. The skin covers rings of bony plates. Seahorses swim upright—like they are standing and swimming at the same time. However, this unusual swimming position means they are not fast swimmers. The seahorse has a prehensile tail. Prehensile means able to grasp. A seahorse can use its tail to grasp and hold onto a piece of seaweed to stay in one place. This is how it hides from enemies.

### **Units 11-14: They're Alive!**

The skin is the human body's largest organ. It's the body's barrier against the outside world. From that outside world, all sorts of living things settle down on our skin. They live on us in countless numbers. Do they cause harm? Or are they helpful? Let's take a look at the organisms that live on and in our skin.

#### **Lice**

Like other parasites, head lice live off their host. The head louse is a blood-sucking insect. It lives in only one place—on the human head. Head lice generally don't spread disease and are not usually dangerous. Lice pass easily from person to person. They can be seen, but only by close inspection. Lice and their eggs can be picked out carefully or killed with special shampoo. One way to avoid getting them is not to share combs or hats.

#### **Bacteria**

Microorganisms are living things that can be seen only under powerful microscopes. Many microorganisms have bodies made up of just one cell. Among the tiniest are bacteria. Human bodies hold more bacteria than human cells! Hundreds of species, or kinds, of bacteria cover our skin. People often think of bacteria as harmful "germs." But natural skin bacteria is useful and not harmful. The human face hosts bacteria that suck up oils, which may help keep the skin clear. Natural skin bacteria also help guard against infections.

#### **Mites**

Body hair grows from little structures under the skin called follicles. Creatures called follicle mites make their living there. The number of mites on a person's skin increases with age. There may be 25 mites around a single follicle, feeding on oils and other material. Surprisingly, human hosts don't even know that these microorganisms are there. Follicle mites are not known to be harmful. In fact, they can have a beneficial effect by eating other microorganisms.



## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: Back in Time

Zach had always imagined that time travel would require a vehicle of some sort. But his experience had been more like stepping through a moment. At the science museum, Professor Kronos had chosen Zach for a time-travel demonstration. Zach had been on a stage with the professor, and the next thing he knew, he had stepped through the moment, and now ... when was now?

Zach looked around. The familiar city was gone. Instead, the flat landscape held a few cypress and pine trees, scattered shrubs, and grass. He felt uneasy, exposed. Not far off, zebras were grazing. Zach squinted at the herd. Oddly, only part of each animal's body had stripes. He had seen pictures of these animals. They weren't zebras. They were North American horses that went extinct in the last Ice Age. Zach gulped. He had time-traveled back at least ten thousand years!

The ground shook under the lumbering steps of another Ice Age mammal. Zach recognized it because there was a life-sized statue of it at the entrance to the science museum. It was a giant ground sloth.

Behind Zach, something made the leaves of a shrub shake. He turned and stared until he saw a shadowy shape, crouching as if ready to pounce. It was a smilodon, a prehistoric cat whose fossilized bones were displayed in the museum. Its long saber-like teeth were sharp enough to slice through the thick skin of a giant ground sloth. The smilodon was looking straight at Zach!

Zach felt the hair on his neck rise. His skin prickled. He felt fear, deep fear, nightmare fear. Should he run? No, that might arouse the instincts of a predator. Zach stood frozen, watching the cat watching him. When it growled and leaped up, Zach had no choice. He bolted like a rabbit. He sprinted across the plain. He dared not look back, but he knew the killer was readying for its final leap and slash of claws.

Something was up ahead—a shimmering, blurred shape. Professor Kronos was beckoning! With a frantic gasp, Zach reached for the shape and passed right through it.

At that moment, Zach was back on the museum stage. The smiling professor asked, "How was the trip?" But Zach was panting too hard to answer.

### Unit 8: The Dog and His Bone

One day a dog was crossing over a stream on a bridge. He had a big, juicy bone in his mouth. When he looked down at the stream, he saw his reflection in the water. Thinking it was another dog with a bone, he stopped to look. He was convinced that the other dog had a bigger, juicier bone. So, he let go of his bone to grab the better bone. In the end, he lost both the bigger, juicier bone, and his own. One bone was only a reflection, and the other bone had been swept away in the stream.

### Unit 9: Don't Count Your Money Too Soon!

Calvin had an idea for making money. He'd rake leaves for people in his neighborhood. Both Mr. Lin and Mrs. North wanted his services on Saturday. He started in Mr. Lin's yard. He raked the leaves into piles that he would pick up at the end.

As he raked, Calvin thought about how much money he would make and how he would spend it. But, he wasn't paying attention to the wind. It was getting stronger. Soon all the leaves in the piles were back in the yard. Calvin had to rake the whole yard again. Before he could rake Mrs. North's yard, the sun went down. Instead of getting money for two yards, he got money for only one. He learned to keep his mind on the job and not count his money too soon.

**Units 11–14: Nobody’s Fool**

“Hi, I’m Bella.”

“I’m Bella,” I repeated. “No! I mean, I’m not Bella. I’m hi. I mean hi.” Ugh! Another embarrassing moment in my life. This time it was meeting the new girl in my chemistry class.

Later that day, I decided that this was my chance to put “Project Nobody’s Fool” into action. I was tired of embarrassing myself. All that was about to change. I was a man with a plan.

Bella was a big part of my plan. She was so friendly that even I felt comfortable around her. A few weeks later, Bella asked, “What are you doing on Saturday afternoon? My family’s having a cookout. Want to come?”

“Sure,” I said. My plan was working! But then I panicked. Why had I accepted Bella’s invitation? What if I made a fool of myself? I was a man who regretted his plan.

On Saturday, I nervously rang Bella’s doorbell. Thankfully, her dog didn’t bark at me. Her father didn’t scowl at me. I began to relax and have fun.

In the backyard, I met everyone in Bella’s enormous family. We were all sitting at a picnic table, ready to eat when Bella’s mother said, “Oh, I forgot! The macaroni salad is still in the refrigerator.” I wanted to make a good impression, so I jumped up and offered to get it.

I carefully climbed up the uneven steps to the back door of the house. I found the kitchen and lifted the giant bowl of macaroni salad out of the refrigerator. Hugging the bowl to my chest, I managed to open the outer door with my elbow.

I started down the steps. My foot landed on something oddly soft and... alive! Bella’s dog leaped up with a yelp. Startled, I lost my balance. I tried to hold onto the bowl as my feet did a clumsy dance, but... I failed. The bowl flew up in the air. The macaroni salad rained down.

And there I lay, on my back on the grass, the picture of humiliation. I was covered with macaroni. I had bits of celery and green pepper in my hair. Globbs of mayonnaise dripped off my nose. The dog gobbled macaroni from my shirt until they pulled him off.

Bella’s father cleaned up the mess and hosed me down. I stayed just long enough to choke down a burger. I said goodbye to Bella, apologized, thanked her parents for the meal, apologized again, and ran the six blocks home.

That was the day I decided to abandon my plan. I decided I was okay with just being me. And the funny thing is, life has been a lot less embarrassing ever since.

**LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 3–6: Pandora’s Box****Characters**

ZEUS: King of the Greek gods

PROMETHEUS: A Titan who disobeys Zeus

PANDORA: A woman created by the gods

**Act 1**

[The top of Mount Olympus, home of the Greek gods. ZEUS sits on his throne, glaring at PROMETHEUS]

ZEUS. [Angrily] Prometheus, kneel before me! I’m beginning to think that you respect those humans you created more than you respect me. Is it true that you lit a torch from the sun to give fire to mankind?

*continued on next page*





PROMETHEUS. [Bowing his head] Yes, it is true.

ZEUS. [Throwing a lightning bolt over PROMETHEUS' head] I told you there was to be no fire for the humans, yet you did not listen. You—and those miserable humans—must be punished.

[PROMETHEUS is dragged offstage.]

ZEUS. [Alone on stage, speaking to himself] Prometheus will spend the rest of his days chained to a rock far from the humans he loves so dearly. As for the humans, I have a plan that will cause them as much misery as they have caused me. But I cannot do it alone...

[Lights fade and curtain falls.]

## Act 2

[All the gods of Mount Olympus are talking excitedly as they gather around a beautiful woman.]

ZEUS. [Smiling and nodding] Yes, yes, she is perfect. No one will be able to resist the gifts you all have given her: beauty, intelligence, curiosity, charm, strength, and talent. But I have one more gift.

[Handing the woman a large box with a lid] Take this box down to the humans, but never open it. Tell them your name is Pandora. It means “the gift of all.” Indeed, that is what you are: a gift from Mount Olympus to mankind.

[Laughing wickedly]

[PANDORA sets off on her journey down Mount Olympus and curtain falls.]

## Act 3

[PANDORA arrives at the bottom of Mount Olympus and stops to rest before continuing on to meet other humans.]

PANDORA. [Looking with curiosity at the box she is holding] This box is so heavy. What on earth is inside? Why would Zeus call it a gift if it is never to be opened? What if I lifted the lid just a small bit to peek inside? [Shrugging her shoulders] What's the worst that could happen?

[PANDORA opens the box. A terrible loud roar is heard as cold, dark winds rush out of the box. All the horrors of the world escape: disease, death, greed, hunger, sadness, and pain of every kind.]

PANDORA. [Sobbing] What have I done? Mankind will never be free from suffering, and it's all my fault. [Wiping her eyes and looking more closely inside the box] But, wait. What's this that was left behind? [Lifting a small white cloud out of the box] It's hope! There is hope for mankind after all.

[Curtain falls.]

## Unit 9: The Sun and the Wind

### Act 1

[Sun and Wind are standing on the right side of the stage. A traveler enters from the other side of the stage. The traveler is wearing a cape. Sun and Wind watch as the traveler moves to the center of the stage and sits down.]

WIND. Look, Sun. There's a traveler. Let's have some fun.

SUN. What?

WIND. Let's see who can make the traveler take off his cape.

SUN. What will I get if I win?

WIND. You will be the best of the best.

*continued on next page*



SUN. Ok, you go first."

### Act 2

[Wind moves to center stage and stands beside the traveler.]

WIND. I will make the traveler take off his cape in no time. Whhhh!

SUN. Wind, the traveler still has his cape on. Try harder!

WIND. I'll try harder. WHHHHHH!!!

SUN. Look, he still has his cape on. In fact, he is wrapping it tighter around him.

### Act 3

[Wind returns to the right of the stage. Sun moves to the center of the stage beside the traveler.]

SUN. Now, watch this, Wind!

[Sun holds his breath and shines.]

WIND. Nothing yet!

SUN. I'll try harder.

[Sun holds his breath and shines harder. The traveler finally takes off his cape.]

WIND. Oh, my! You win!!

## Units 11-14: The SIBS Robots

### Characters

THE BOSS: A female human homeowner

SIBS 9.1: A household robot (with a face, arms, and legs)

SIBS 9.5: A newer, smaller household robot (with a face, arms, and legs)

[A living room, with the door to the home visible. The set includes two chairs; shelves with a vase, a dish, and other decorative objects displayed; and a coffee table with objects on it. One morning in the not-too-distant future.]

[SIBS 9.1 stands inside by closed entry door.]

SIBS 9.1. [Announcing] Signal received. Drone delivery incoming. [A loud THUNK is heard. SIBS 9.1 opens the door, drags a large carton into the room, shuts the door.] [BOSS enters from left and walks to the carton.]

BOSS. [Looking at carton label] Oh, this is from SIBS, the Super Intelligence Better Service company. Their artificial intelligence products are the best! [Points to SIBS 9.1] They made you, 9.1! [SIBS 9.1 gives an appreciative salute] I ordered a SIBS 9.5, the newest model. Open the carton, 9.1.

[SIBS 9.1 opens the carton and rolls SIBS 9.5 onto the floor. BOSS pushes the power button on SIBS 9.5's belly. The robot whirs and rises to stand to attention.]

BOSS. It's so cute!

SIBS 9.1. It's too small.

BOSS. I'm sure that 9.5 will be a big help to you. You can share the chores.

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SIBS 9.1. I can do the chores myself.

BOSS. [to SIBS 9.1] I must go to an appointment now. I don't have time to program 9.5, so you can do that. Start by showing 9.5 how to dust. Then iron. Just do the usual picking up, too. [BOSS exits through door. SIBS 9.1 saunters past SIBS 9.5, giving it a hip check. SIBS 9.5 falls and gets up again.]

SIBS 9.5. Boss said dust first. Checking terminology.... Dust: Fine powder made of particles.

SIBS 9.1. That's right. [Pauses, then gets an idea] When you dust, you sprinkle fine powder all around. I'll get you some.

[SIBS 9.1 exits and immediately returns with a container of baby powder. SIBS 9.5 takes the powder and sprinkles it on the furniture.]

SIBS 9.1. Yeah! That's just the way to dust.

SIBS 9.5. Boss said iron next. Checking terminology.... Iron: A strong, silver-gray metal.

SIBS 9.1. True. When you iron, you use strong metal to take things apart. [Looks around and points] Things like that vase. I'll get the iron bar.

[SIBS 9.1 exits and immediately returns with an iron bar. SIBS 9.5 takes the bar and smashes the vase.]

SIBS 9.1. Good job! May as well iron the dish, too. [SIBS 9.5 smashes the dish.]

SIBS 9.5. Boss said do the picking up. Checking terminology.... Pick up: Lift.

SIBS 9.1. You're a real whiz! When you do the picking up, you lift furniture. Then you toss it.

[SIBS 9.5 obeys by lifting and overturning the chairs, coffee table, and shelves while SIBS 9.1 gives encouragement. When the room is a complete mess, the door opens. Both robots stand at attention as BOSS enters. She is horrified by the sight.]

BOSS. What happened here?

SIBS 9.5. I did the chores. 9.1 taught me.

BOSS. Hmm, that's puzzling. [to SIBS 9.1] Your operating system must have a glitch. I'll power you down for a day. That should solve the problem. [Pushes the robot's power button, and SIBS 9.1, mouth open and hands up in protest, whirs to a stop. Then BOSS speaks kindly to SIBS 9.5.] I'll teach you to clean up. I'm sure you'll do fine.

[SIBS 9.5 gives an appreciative salute.]

[Curtain.]

## LEVEL 7 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: Althea Gibson

On August 25, 1927, Althea Gibson was born in Silver, South Carolina. When Althea was young, her family moved north to Harlem, New York City. The streets were playgrounds for African American children in Harlem.

Althea was a gifted athlete from a young age. She loved competing in all sports. Even more, Althea loved winning. At the age of 12, she became the New York City girls' paddle tennis champion. As an African American athlete, Althea would deal with racial discrimination throughout her life.

Adults saw young Althea's skill and her drive to win. They welcomed her into a Harlem tennis club. Althea was

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different from the more wealthy African American members of the club. She was poor. She had dropped out of school. She was as tough as a street fighter.

Tennis, like most organized sports in the 1940s, was separated by race. White players and black players did not compete against each other. The American Tennis Association, ATA, was an African American organization. Althea won the ATA Junior National championship as a teenager.

Dr. Robert Walter Johnson was an ATA leader. He admired how persistent Althea was. She never gave up, no matter how difficult the challenge. She had height, power, speed, skill, and a history of winning. Dr. Johnson ran a top-level training camp. He invited Althea to attend.

With urging from white players, Gibson was invited to play in the Nationals. In 1950, Althea Gibson became the first African American tennis player to compete in the Nationals at Forest Hills, New York. On the court, Gibson tuned out racial insults from the stands. She came close to defeating the defending champion.

Althea Gibson kept playing hard. She kept improving and winning. In 1957, she won the championship in England at Wimbledon. Two months later, she won the U.S. Nationals Ladies Singles Championships. She won at Wimbledon again in 1958.

After Althea won at Wimbledon again in 1958, she retired from tennis. She continued playing sports, though, and went on to become one of the first African American women to play professional golf in the 1960s.

Althea Gibson died at the age of 76 on September 28, 2003. Althea's talent and persistence were recognized during her lifetime and afterward. Sports Illustrated listed Althea as one of the "100 Greatest Female Athletes." She has been honored by the International Tennis Hall of Fame and the U.S. Open Court of Champions. Her persistence opened the doors for future black athletes to compete in sports.

What Althea achieved during her life has changed the world. This impact can be felt both on and off the tennis court. Friend and former mayor of New York City, David Dinkins, describes her as an inspiration to anyone. Scholarships created in her honor allow young athletes to attend college. Thank you, Althea Gibson!

## **Unit 8: First in Space**

Valentina Tereshkova was born in 1937 in Russia. At age 16, she left school to work in a factory. Valentina was a fearless skydiver and became interested in space. She didn't have experience as a pilot. But, she was one of only five women accepted into the Soviet space program. During training, she passed difficult tests. She had to be alone for long periods of time and handle conditions with no gravity. In 1963, Valentina became the very first woman to fly to space. Thanks to her brave actions and clever thinking, she solved a serious problem during the flight. Valentina received several honors and awards for her accomplishments. She has inspired many young women interested in space exploration.

## **Unit 9: Superstar and Role Model**

Laurie Hernandez was born on June 9, 2000. As a young girl growing up in New Jersey, Laurie became interested in gymnastics. There were not many Latina girls at the gym where she practiced day after day. Her long hours of practice and determination paid off. She won both a gold and a silver medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics. On November 22, 2016, she became the youngest winner of the TV show *Dancing with the Stars*. Her autobiography was published on January 24, 2017. Today, Laurie says her greatest accomplishment is being a role model for other Latina girls.

**Units 11–14: Dolores Huerta**

Dolores Clara Fernandez Huerta was born on April 10, 1930, in Dawson, New Mexico. Huerta is a Chicana: this means she is an American of Mexican descent. Her grandparents moved from Mexico to the United States. Huerta's family taught her the importance of helping others. Her father was a farm worker and miner. Her mother owned a hotel where she helped families and farm workers.

In the early 1950s, Huerta worked as a teacher. She wanted to help her students who were going through hard times. She wanted to help others in her community too.

At the time, farm workers worked in dangerous conditions. These conditions exposed them to harmful chemicals. Workers also did not get enough food and shelter. They worked under these hard conditions but were paid low wages.

Huerta helped create the National Farm Workers Association in 1962. This group wanted to make life better and safer for farm workers. In 1975, they were successful: the United States government passed the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. This law allowed farm workers to demand safe working conditions and fair pay.

Huerta was also a public speaker. When she spoke, she was strong and passionate. She shared important ideas in convincing ways. Her famous saying was "Sí, se puede." Huerta started using this phrase to inspire workers. She believed that if they worked hard together, they could make a difference.

In 1988, Huerta was badly hurt at a demonstration. Despite her injury, she did not stop working. She still went across the country to give speeches. Over the years, she even spoke to presidents of the United States. She wanted them to pass laws to help farm workers.

Huerta has won many awards because of her lifelong commitment to civil rights. In 2012, the U.S. president gave her an award called the Presidential Medal of Freedom. The award was for the impact she made on her country, such as how she changed the lives of farm workers. Huerta's life inspires others to get involved in issues they feel passionate about.

Note from the author, Mydalis Vera: I identify as Latina/e. I have led community projects for families in my state. In the last ten years, I have been involved in my community as a rehousing specialist for homeless families, an emergency response social worker, and an English as a second language teacher.

**LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 1****Units 3–6: Mastodons and Mammoths**

In 2014, a contractor in Michigan was digging up his neighbor's backyard. He was amazed to find a long, curved bone. It was a rib bone from a gigantic animal. The two men kept digging. After uncovering more bones, they called in an expert. The scientist said the 42 bones belonged to a mastodon. Mastodons died out 10,000 years ago!

In 2007, a reindeer herder in Siberia found the frozen body of a baby mammal. It was a woolly mammoth. Scientists concluded that the animal had died 40 thousand years earlier! Woolly mammoths have been extinct for 10 thousand years.

These remains have been carefully studied, along with many others found over the years. Mastodons and woolly mammoths are ancient cousins. Both are related to Earth's largest living land mammals—elephants.

**Mastodons**

The earliest mastodons appeared about 35 million years ago in Africa. Over time, the animals traveled and changed. Mastodon remains are commonly found in North America.

Large adult mastodons weighed about five tons. Though slightly shorter than modern-day elephants, mastodons

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were more heavyset. They had long, curving tusks. Short fur covered their trunks, tails, and bodies.

Scientists know that mastodons were plant eaters. The animals' teeth were made for grinding. Mastodons ate mainly leaves, fruits, and other tree parts.

### **Woolly Mammoths**

The first mammoths appeared about two million years ago. Researchers say that mammoths descended from an African ancestor. Asian and African elephants share that ancestor. Mammoths are most closely related to modern Asian elephants.

Several kinds of mammoths roamed through Europe, Asia, and North America. Woolly mammoths adapted to survive in the coldest regions. A woolly mammoth had a long coat of thick, shaggy fur. Under that coat were two more layers of fur. Fur covered its trunk and tail, too. These animals weighed as much as six tons. They were similar in height to mastodons. But mastodons had longer bodies.

Like mastodons, woolly mammoths had tusks. Mammoth tusks, however, grew much longer. The teeth and stomach contents of woolly mammoths show that the animals were grazers. They fed on grasses, shrubs, and other ground plants.

### **Extinction**

Woolly mammoths and mastodons died out during the last Ice Age. So did many other large animals. Scientists do not know for sure what killed them. It's possible that human hunters were responsible. Perhaps a changing climate or a natural disaster played a role. There are still questions to explore and answers to discover.

## **Unit 9: Two of a Kind**

There are African elephants and Asian elephants. In many ways, these elephants are the same. Let's compare them. Both elephants are related to the woolly mammoth. African elephants have trunks just like Asian elephants. The elephants are also similar in color. In addition, they are both plant-eating animals and live in herds, or groups.

Now, let's contrast them. What are some ways that these two elephants are different? Although African and Asian elephants have large ears, the African elephant's ears are larger. Female African elephants have tusks. However, female Asian elephants don't. African elephants have a dip in their backs, but Asian elephants have an arch instead.

## **Units 11-14: Two Little Mermaids**

In Copenhagen, Denmark, a statue of a mermaid sits on a rock in the harbor. She's the beloved character from the fairy tale "The Little Mermaid." Denmark's famous author, Hans Christian Andersen, wrote the story almost 200 years ago. Today, children worldwide know the tale of the little mermaid. They even know her name—Ariel. But Andersen never named his main character. Ariel is familiar only from Disney's 1989 animated movie *The Little Mermaid*. The movie tells a different story.

Disney's *The Little Mermaid* is only loosely based on Andersen's tale. Ariel, like Andersen's little mermaid, is the daughter of the Sea King. In both tales, she has a beautiful singing voice. In both, she dreams of being part of the human world. Ariel rescues a handsome prince from a shipwreck and falls in love with him. So does Andersen's little mermaid. Ariel asks a sea witch to transform her fishtail into legs and gives up her voice in exchange. That event is also in the original. Ariel has three days to get a true-love kiss from her prince. If she fails, she'll become an eel-like creature under the sea witch's control. But Andersen's sea witch warns the little mermaid of a different outcome if the prince marries someone else. "Your heart will break, and you will become foam on the crest of the waves."

Disney fairy tales end happily. In the Disney version, Ariel gets her voice back and marries the prince. Andersen's mermaid, however, is a tragic character. Every step on her human feet brings intense pain. She watches sadly

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as her prince marries someone else. Then she learns she can avoid her death by killing the prince. She decides against that. Instead, she leaps into the sea and dies.

The purpose of Disney's movie is to entertain audiences. Children laugh at the antics of Ariel's helpers, a flounder and a crab. There's plenty of danger and action. There are lively songs. People admire the beautiful animation and creative storytelling.

Andersen also wrote his tale to entertain children. He wanted the reader to learn a lesson as well: staying true to yourself is more important than changing to please others. This lesson becomes clear when Ariel changes so much of herself to find love, but in the end, her dream remains out of reach.

## LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: The Titanic Tragedy

The British ocean liner Titanic sank in the North Atlantic Ocean more than 100 years ago. It was one of the worst shipwrecks in history, and the most famous. The Titanic's tragic story is still the first to come to mind when people think of disasters at sea.

#### The Crossing

On April 11, 1912, the Titanic steamed out of Queenstown, Ireland. This was the ship's last stop in Europe. The gigantic ship began its first Atlantic crossing, to New York City. The Titanic was designed for high-style travel. It was also designed for safety. Its steel hull held 16 watertight compartments. Even if two compartments flooded, the ship would still float. Engineers agreed that the Titanic was practically unsinkable.

On the night of April 14, the Titanic was traveling at high speed, although there were warnings of icebergs. Lookouts were posted to search for the huge ice masses. Their binoculars were missing, so they used their eyes alone. Before midnight, the lookouts spotted a nearby iceberg. There was a quick attempt to steer the giant ship away. But the ship's side hit the iceberg. As a result, five compartments quickly filled with seawater. Two and a half hours later, the ship broke apart and sank.

#### The Lifeboats

More than 2,200 people were on board. There were enough lifeboats for only half of them. When a rescue ship arrived at about 4 a.m., it picked up 704 survivors. Many lifeboats were only half full because of the confusion in loading them. The crew had not been trained in the procedures for use.

The original design of the Titanic included lifeboats for nearly 3,000 people. But all those lifeboats would hang on the upper deck. That would mean high-paying passengers would not have a clear ocean view. So the number of lifeboats was reduced.

The first-class passengers included the rich and famous. But hundreds of third-class passengers were confined to the lower decks. Only about one-fourth of them found their way to the lifeboats.

#### The Story

The sinking of the Titanic was the biggest news of the day. It's still big news. Since that fateful night, countless books have described the moment-by-moment events on board. Songs have been sung about the courage of those who knew they were about to die. Movies have told the dramatic story, too.

The stories inspired shipwreck hunters to locate the Titanic. They finally succeeded in 1985. Since then, deep-sea diving vessels have continued to explore the doomed ship's burial place. The ship's hull has been examined. Why did it fail? Some scientists argue that the steel became brittle in the ice-cold water and cracked easily. Another reason might be faulty iron rivets. The debate continues to this day.

Many factors contributed to the tragedy of the Titanic. Many lessons were learned from it, too.



**Unit 9: A Man and His Donkey**

A man once owned a donkey. The man was a hard-working man. But, his donkey was always trying to avoid work. One day the donkey was carrying bags of salt for the man to sell. The bags were heavy. The donkey accidentally fell into the river. The salt dissolved in the water, and his load became lighter. So, every day for a week, the donkey purposefully fell into the river. Because the man could not sell the salt, he decided to teach the donkey a lesson. Therefore, he filled the bags with cotton. When the donkey fell into the river, the cotton absorbed the water and, as a result, the bags became unbearably heavy. The donkey almost drowned. Consequently, the donkey never fell into the river again.

**Units 11–14: Disease at Sea**

In the past, sailing ships voyaged for months at a time. The sailors faced many dangers, including a disease called scurvy. Scurvy caused terrible suffering. Skin bruised easily, and black spots formed. Cuts did not heal. The gums swelled, bled, and turned black. Teeth fell out. Joints ached. The senses were affected, too, with strange smells and imaginary sights. Death was a common outcome.

In 1747, James Lind was serving as a ship's doctor in the British Navy. He was familiar with the dreadful effects of scurvy. The disease took more lives than battles with the enemy! There were different ideas about how to treat scurvy. Lind decided to test several methods. At the time, medical experiments comparing different treatments were unknown.

Lind selected twelve men with similar cases of scurvy. He paired them and gave each pair the same treatment for six days. Two drank cider. Two drank vinegar. Two drank seawater. Two gargled with a liquid containing sulfuric acid. Two ate certain spices. And two ate oranges and a lemon.

Only one of the treatments worked! The men who ate the oranges and lemons had "sudden and visible good effects," according to Lind. He did not know the reason why fruits cured the disease. But he recommended changing the diet of sailors to include fresh fruits. His recommendations were largely ignored. Not until 1795 did the British Navy issue an order to carry lime juice on board naval vessels. As a result, scurvy became much less common.

Still, there was debate about WHY lime juice was effective. Then, in the 1920s, a Hungarian scientist made a breakthrough discovery. Albert Szent-Györgyi was studying chemical changes in cells. He identified a molecule in citrus juice that could delay cellular damage. Szent-Györgyi molecule would later be called ascorbic acid, or vitamin C. Because of his discovery of vitamin C and how it works, Szent-Györgyi received the high honor of a Nobel Prize.

Vitamin C is found in citrus fruits, like oranges and lemons. It is also found in foods such as berries, dark leafy greens, broccoli, and tomatoes. The human body requires vitamin C for cellular health. Without it, blood vessels weaken and gums bleed. Wounds can't heal. Tissues that support the joints fail. Chemical messengers in the brain can't work properly. In scurvy, the body collapses in many ways. And the cause is clear—a lack of vitamin C in the diet.

**LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 3–6: Take a Hint, Please!****Characters**

BARTHOLOMEW: A man with a yoga mat

CHAD: A man with a lot to talk about

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[A scenic overlook at the top of Wilderness Hill. It is a mild spring afternoon. A slight breeze carries the music of distant songbirds. A man sits silently on a yoga mat at the side of the grassy clearing.]

CHAD. [Grunting with effort and panting heavily] Phew! I finally made it. Let's see if this view is worth the climb. Well, this is a surprise. I didn't expect to meet anyone up here. Hello, there. I'm Chad—pleased to meet you.

BARTHOLOMEW. [Quietly, as if absorbed in his own thoughts] Oh. Hello.

CHAD. [Talking non-stop in a friendly manner] You must be one of those yogis, with that funny way of sitting you have and that mat. Not a real sport like hiking, but whatever flips your pancake. Right? Say, I didn't catch your name.

BARTHOLOMEW. Bartholomew.

CHAD. Well, that's a mouthful! My name's Chadwick, but everyone calls me Chad. Well, some people call me Chat, but I think they just don't hear me correct them the first few times.... Anyway, what do friends and family call you? [Barely pausing to wait for a response that doesn't come anyway] I'll bet it's Bart! ... This is my first time up here. It was quite a climb! ... So, Bart, you seem to know what you're doing with those stretchy poses. What's that one? The Pretzel?

BARTHOLOMEW. The Lotus Pose. Ah, could you take your foot off my hand? CHAD. Mind if I share your mat? I could use a comfortable spot to rest. BARTHOLOMEW. How about going over there by that rock instead?

CHAD. That rock? I don't think I'd be able to see what you're doing from over there. BARTHOLOMEW. Please, I came up here for a place to meditate.

CHAD. Hmmm, so you say.... Oh, I get it. How about if I just sit on this half of the mat, like this?

BARTHOLOMEW. [Sighs and then, with forced calmness] Breathe in, breathe out, breathe in....

CHAD. What was that, Bart? I didn't hear.... You know, I've always been interested in learning yoga. I have a cousin who's into yoga. Well, she's more like a second cousin, or maybe a third. Actually, she's my wife's cousin. Constance Moore, that's her name—not my wife, the cousin, I mean. I call her Connie. She does yoga like you. Or maybe it's belly dancing. It's not for me, but, like I say, whatever tosses your salad....

BARTHOLOMEW. [Letting out a long breath, testily] Please.

CHAD. That handstand is really something. But your mat is a bit crooked. [Without thinking] I'll just give this corner a tug....

BARTHOLOMEW. Stop! I'm going to... [Falls awkwardly]

CHAD. You'd better keep practicing that one. I'll give you some room.

BARTHOLOMEW. Yes. Please do that.

CHAD. [Moving close to the mat again] So, what do you call that move you're doing now?

BARTHOLOMEW. The Corpse Pose.

CHAD. That's ridiculous. You can't even see anything with your head on the mat like that.

BARTHOLOMEW. [Exploding with exasperation] I need to focus on what I'm doing! I can't be answering questions from a stranger! I need peace and quiet. Why can't you see that I'm up here all alone on purpose! Why can't you see that? Why? Why?

[CHAD and BARTHOLOMEW stare at each other in stunned silence.]

CHAD. Calm down, Bart, calm down. You should have just told me that to begin with. I can take a hint. You really ought to take up something more relaxing.

**Unit 8: Ice Covered Deserts**

You may know that all deserts are dry. But did you know they can be either very hot or very cold? Some deserts are covered with sand and some are covered with ice! The largest hot desert on Earth is the Sahara Desert. The largest cold desert on Earth is Antarctica. Most deserts have animals and plants. But, living things in the two different kinds of deserts are not the same!

**Unit 9: Frogs at the Well**

On one summer day, two very hot and thirsty frogs looked for water. At last, they came to a well. The bold frog said, "Let's jump in. There could be water in there."

The careful frog replied, "What if there isn't any water in the well? We could get stuck!"

The bold frog said, "Come on! We have nothing to lose. I think we should jump in!"

Before long, the frogs hopped away from the well, feeling refreshed and no longer thirsty.

**Units 11-14: Thirty Seconds****Characters**

GABBY: A student

KIRWAN: Gabby's friend

MS. HERNANDEZ: The teacher

CLASSMATES

[A classroom in Coolidge High School. Student-writing samples are displayed on the walls, along with posters of poets and authors.]

KIRWAN. [Bumping into GABBY as he runs into the classroom] Oh, sorry! I didn't want to be late. I've been late every day this week, and Ms. Hernandez said she'd give me detention if I was late once more. She is so strict about being on time! [Pausing] So, are you ready to give your talk?

GABBY. [Disheveled and out of breath] I didn't want to be, like, late either! I am, like, so ready! I could, like, give this talk in my sleep! I can't believe Ms. Hernandez is, like, really going to give us pizza. She is usually so, like, serious.

KIRWAN. [Looking skeptical] But you just said like. Five times.

GABBY. I did? Yikes! I guess I say it without, like, even realizing it.

KIRWAN. Remember, the whole class will get pizza only if you can talk for thirty seconds without saying like.

GABBY. [Shrugging her shoulders] Thirty seconds is, like, not that long.

KIRWAN. [Smiling at his friend] Ok, if you win, just remember the little people who helped you on the way up. I like pizza a lot!

GABBY. [With a shocked expression] You just said like.

KIRWAN. But that kind of like is OK. Just don't say the other kind of like. What does Ms. Hernandez call it?

GABBY. The filler like. [Looking over her shoulder] Hey, here she comes!

[MS. HERNANDEZ and CLASSMATES enter. GABBY, KIRWAN, and CLASSMATES take their seats. MS. HERNANDEZ holds a pizza box that she places on her desk.]

MS. HERNANDEZ. Good morning, class! Please get settled while I talk with Gabby for a minute. [Motioning for



GABBY to come up to her desk]

GABBY. [Nervously] Yes, Ms. Hernandez?

MS. HERNANDEZ. [Smiling encouragingly] Gabby, I want to tell you that I know you can do this. We're all rooting for you.

GABBY. [Looking more relaxed] Thanks.

MS. HERNANDEZ. [Turning to face the class, in a louder voice] OK, students. The first thing we'll do today is listen to Gabby give her thirty-second talk without using like as a filler word. If she succeeds, everyone gets pizza [She pauses as CLASSMATES clap.] from DiNapoli's Pizzeria on Third Avenue. [Applause, cheers, fist pumps from CLASSMATES]

[To GABBY] Ready? [GABBY nods.] OK, I've got my timer ready. And ... begin.

GABBY. [Reciting her speech, at a natural rate] I want to thank Ms. Hernandez for giving me the opportunity to talk on any topic of my choice. To choose a topic, I started to list things that interest me. I listed friendship, fashion, travel, and a few other things. But then I realized I have only thirty seconds to talk, and nobody will be listening to what I say anyway. They'll be listening to make sure I don't say a certain word that Ms. Hernandez doesn't like to hear. [Looks startled, but instantly relieved as she realizes this use of like is permissible] I admit I use that word a lot, but I haven't used it in this talk. Thank you very much.

MS. HERNANDEZ. [Excited] Thirty-three seconds! You did it! Hooray! [Applause and cheers from CLASSMATES]

GABBY. [Wiping imaginary sweat from her brow] I am, like, so relieved! [Puts hand to her mouth while hearing gasps from KIRWAN and other CLASSMATES]

MS. HERNANDEZ. [Opening the box of pizza] I'll pretend I didn't hear that.

## LEVEL 8 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: The Legend of William Tell

Long ago, the people of Switzerland did not rule themselves. Instead, they were forced to obey officials from the powerful Austrian empire. One official was a man named Gessler, and he was especially proud and cruel. Gessler put up a pole in the town square and set his hat on its top. He told his soldiers, "Guard this pole! Make sure that everyone who comes near bows to my hat. These people must show respect to my power. If they refuse, arrest them!"

The people were too frightened of Gessler and his brutal soldiers to even think of disobeying. All of them bowed to the hat—all but one. William Tell, known as the best hunter in the region, glanced up at the hat, gave a disgusted snort, and walked right by. The soldiers arrested him and brought him to Gessler.

Gessler narrowed his eyes as he looked at Tell, who stood tall with a green cap on his head. "I have heard of you," Gessler said. "You have a reputation for being good with a crossbow."

"I have some skill," replied Tell, a slight smile on his face.

"Then I will put you to the test," Gessler said, chuckling. "Your son will stand in the town square with an apple on his head. You must stand at 20 strides and shoot an arrow into the apple. If you succeed, you will go free."

"And if I refuse?" asked Tell.

"Then my soldiers will kill the boy," said Gessler, with a threatening grin.

In the town square, people gathered to watch the terrible test. William Tell's young son stood straight and still

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with an apple balanced on his head. At a distance, his father carefully placed the arrow in the bow, raised it slowly, and took aim. The arrow flew through the air. The apple broke apart as the arrow pierced it, leaving the boy's head untouched. The crowd cheered. Gessler scowled.

As William Tell turned to go, another arrow dropped from under his shirt, where he had hidden it. Gessler pointed to it. "What is that arrow for?" he asked Tell.

"Had I hurt my boy," Tell replied, "this arrow would have been for you."

William Tell went on to help unite the Swiss people and fight for independence. He remains a hero of the country of Switzerland.

### **Unit 9: The Proud Horse**

The proud horse was ready for the parade. Today he'd help carry the Olympic torch, a symbol of the games. I'm the most handsome horse there ever was, he thought arrogantly. He was indeed beautiful. His shiny black coat sparkled in the sunshine and his long mane rested elegantly along his neck. They set out and immediately people clapped and cheered. He was convinced this was for him. See, they all admire me he bragged loudly. He began prancing in a circle to show off his beauty to the onlookers. His owner quickly guessed the horse's thoughts and tugged sternly on the reins.

"Move along silly horse," he scolded. "That cheering isn't for you. It's for the Olympic torch you're carrying!"

### **Units 11-14: The Choice**

In a panic, the villagers ran to Madam Sophia's hut. She saw their wild eyes and knew there was trouble. "You must help us," they cried when she came to the door. Madam Sophia listened calmly to their frightened voices.

"The king has sent his soldiers here," said one villager.

"The General is threatening to burn the whole village!" said another.

Madam Sophia considered the situation carefully. She understood that this king, like many before, showed his power through fear and violence. "I will speak to the General," she said.

The people sighed in relief. They were hopeful that Madam Sophia would be able to save them. She was as poor as the villagers themselves. She was not powerful. She had little physical strength left. In fact, she was as fragile as a dried flower. Yet this ancient, white-haired woman was known far and wide for her wisdom. She was often called Sophia the Wise.

Arriving at the General's tent, Madam Sophia bowed her head respectfully to greet him. "So, you are Sophia the Wise," said the General. "I can see that you're not Sophia the Young and Strong," he added with a cruel laugh. "My soldiers are here to turn this village into smoking rubble. You cannot possibly think you will be able to stop us," the General sneered unpleasantly.

"Fate will decide what will happen," replied Madam Sophia.

The General's thick eyebrows rose, as an idea occurred to him. "Oh, yes," he said deviously. "Shall we let fate decide?" He took two slips of paper and scribbled something on each. After he folded each paper, he held out both to Madam Sophia. "Which paper will you choose? The one with the word Destroy, or the one with Save? Your choice will determine the fate of this village."

Madam Sophia looked at both folded papers. She doubted that the General would be giving her a fair chance of saving the village. It was likely that both papers said Destroy. The villagers would be doomed no matter which choice she made. But quickly, she snatched one paper. Without looking at it, she popped it into her mouth and

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swallowed. It was gone.

The surprised General cried, "Why did you do that?"

"Look at the paper still in your hand," said Madam Sophia. "If it says, Destroy, then you'll know that I chose Save." And that was how Sophia the Wise saved her village.

## LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: The Thief and the King

Long ago in Korea, a thief was caught stealing a bit of silk. He was brought before the King. "Your punishment will be a lesson to others," the King told the thief. "I will not tolerate stealing in my realm." He sentenced the thief to serve ten years in jail.

Alone in his jail cell, the thief hung his head. He cursed the fact that he lived under the rule of an intolerant king. True, he had committed a crime. But ten years seemed unjust. The clever thief paused to consider all that the King had said and done.

The next morning, he asked the jailer to take him to the King. "Ridiculous," the jailer laughed harshly. "Don't waste my time." But each day the thief made the same request. Each day his plea became more urgent, until he finally told the jailer, "I must give the King this precious gift before it is too late." The jailer's curiosity won out, and he agreed to arrange for the thief to see the King.

When the thief entered the Great Hall, he walked slowly past the members of the Royal Council: the Minister of Defense, the Minister of the Treasury, the Minister of Education, and the Queen. At last, the thief bowed before the King. "Your Highness, please accept this gift," said the thief. He held out a small parcel wrapped in gold silk.

The King untied the silk wrapping. He almost dropped what lay within when he saw what it was. "Do you wish to make a fool of me?" the King sputtered angrily. "This is not a precious gift," he cried. "It is a worthless plum pit! Take this thief back to his cell!" he demanded.

"Wait, your Highness!" cried the thief. "A tree with golden plums will grow for the one who plants that pit. I must give it away because only a person who has never lied, cheated, or stolen will succeed in growing the golden plums," the thief explained. "I am sure that your Highness is a man worthy of this gift."

The King hung his head, remembering how he had lied to the Queen after breaking her favorite vase. "No," he confessed, "I am not worthy."

"Your Minister of Defense then," suggested the thief. "He must be a man who deserves such a gift." The Minister of Defense turned away in shame as he thought of the bribes he had accepted.

The thief turned. He held out the pit to the Minister of the Treasury. "Will you accept this gift?"

The Minister of the Treasury put his hands in his pockets. He felt the gold coins he had taken from the King's coffer. He sighed and shook his head.

Walking around the Royal Hall, the thief offered the pit to every person in the room. No one could accept his gift. No one was free from having lied, cheated, or stolen.

"Members of the Royal Council," the thief called out. "You have all lied, cheated, or stolen, yet here you are—free to live as you see fit. I stole a mere bit of silk to wrap my gift for the King. For that, I am locked in a jail cell. Where is the justice in this?"

The enlightened King paused to consider all that the thief had said and done. "Go free," he proclaimed. "You have taken much, but you have given more. Thank you for this gift."

**Unit 8: The Ant and the Dove**

An ant fell into a stream and struggled to reach the shore. A dove saw the ant in danger. The dove dropped a leaf in the stream. The ant climbed on the leaf and floated to shore. She felt grateful for the dove's kindness. Later, a hunter was getting ready to shoot the dove. The ant saw the dove in danger. The ant bit the hunter on the heel. He cried out in pain, and the dove flew to safety. She felt grateful for the ant's kindness.

**Unit 9: The Farmer and His Sons**

Just before a farmer died, he told his sons that there was treasure hidden on their land. He didn't know the exact spot, but it was there. If they worked hard, they would find the treasure. As soon as the farmer died, the sons began to dig up their land. The sons worked hard in the hot sun of summer and into the chilling rains of fall. When they had dug up all the land and the winter snow began to fall, they hadn't found the treasure.

When winter ended, the sons looked over the land that they had worked hard on. They saw new plants growing everywhere. In the fall, they harvested more crops than they had ever harvested before. They sold them and became very rich. The sons finally understood that because they worked hard, they had found the treasure—the crops.

**Units 11–14: Think...Or Sink**

When his mother asked him to drive to the hardware store, Ray eagerly agreed. He had just earned his license and was always happy to drive. The accident happened on his way home. Two lanes merged into one, and Ray didn't see the big truck beside him until it was too late. The truck sideswiped him, sending Ray's car off the icy road and down an embankment. It plunged into the lake.

Dazed, Ray saw water rapidly rising through the floorboards. It was already sloshing over his legs. The car was sinking quickly. Ray pushed the button to unlock the door. He heard a click. The electronics still worked! But when he tried to push against the door, nothing happened. The water pressure was too great.

Trapped! Panic and fear overwhelmed him. Ray knew he was panicking. But that knowledge didn't help. It only made him more frantic. His heart was pounding. His brain refused to work. Water rushed over the seat tops. Ray put his head in his hands. Trapped! He would drown unless he acted quickly. What should he do?

Ray tried to breathe normally. Tried to push aside the fear that scrambled his thoughts. He suddenly realized an important truth. He knew without a doubt that he needed to think clearly to save himself. Think. Calm down and think. Any way to escape? The window. Out the window!

Ray unbuckled his seatbelt. The back window would be better, because the car was sinking front- end first. He climbed into the back seat and pressed the window button. Nothing. He pressed it again, again. No response. Think. Stop and think. Break it. How?

The hammer! The hammer his mother had asked him to buy at the hardware store was on the passenger-side floor. Ray squirmed into the front again. Holding his breath, he dived down. Where is the hammer? Where is it? Just calm down and try again. He came up for air. The surging water was already chest-high.

Ray focused on his one mission. He dived into the freezing, bubbling darkness, again and again. At last, his hand gripped the hammer. He confidently shot up out of the water. Climbing into the back seat, he smashed the hammer against the window. The glass cracked. With every ounce of strength he had left, he smashed again. Water began pouring in through the open window. Ray took a deep breath, gripped the sides of the frame, and forced his body through.

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When he reached the surface of the lake, Ray took a deep calming breath. He had done it! His clear thinking had saved him. Ray looked toward the embankment and saw that the truck driver had stopped after the accident. "I'm here!" Ray called, treading water and waving to attract attention. The water was ice-cold, but Ray was a strong swimmer and knew he would make it. He slowly made his way toward shore and toward safety.

## LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: Churros and Hot Chocolate

"Churros! Hot chocolate!" my grandmother calls from the welcoming warmth of our cozy kitchen. Abuelita is staying with us to help Mami with the new baby. Since she arrived, she's been cooking non-stop. Our apartment has never been so full of food or people.

Every afternoon, my older brother Daniel and I race home from the bus stop. We can smell the deliciously sweet aromas coming from deep inside even before we reach the front door. Sometimes my mouth begins to water as my nose fills with the scent of buttery pastry or spicy chocolate. And, every once in a while, I don't even notice my baby sister's piercingly loud wails as I push the door open.

Today is a typical February day: bone-chilling and windy. Icy rain spills from dark storm clouds. A perfect day for churros and hot chocolate. Daniel is already in the kitchen, munching on a sugary churro.

"Gracias, Abuelita!" I say as she hands me a plate filled with long, crispy wands of sweet, warm fried dough. I sit at the table where a mug of molten, rich hot chocolate is waiting for me. I eat slowly, dipping my churro into the thick, creamy chocolate drink. I am savoring each bite.

Then, I notice Daniel staring at me. His plate is empty except for a dusting of cinnamon and sugar. "Hey, can I have that?" he asks. His fingers inch toward my still-full plate.

"No," I answer, shielding my plate with my arms. "You already had yours. You ate too fast."

Daniel squints as he looks at my churros. "Are you sure you want to eat those?" he asks. "I think Abuelita left them in the pan too long. They smell like burned, moldy gym socks. And that hot chocolate looks lumpy. Like it might have been made with spoiled cream. In fact, it makes me think of that black mud mask that Mami uses on her face."

My brother likes to play mind games. I refuse to go along. "If it's so awful, why do you want some?" I ask.

"I'm actually doing you a favor, little brother," Daniel answers quickly. "I know what's best for you." What Daniel doesn't know is that our grandmother is standing right behind him. She has her hands on her hips and a frown on her face. I decide to do him a favor. "That just means there's more for me. Right, Abuelita?"

### Unit 10: Spring

Cassandra marked off another day on her calendar as her countdown to spring. She pictured spring in her mind. The birds twittering announced its arrival. She could feel the sun warming her cheeks and a light breeze tickling her nose. The air had that wonderfully earthy scent of new life. The budding trees were dotted with tiny splashes of color that were about to explode. Her mouth watered just thinking about juicy strawberries and sweet corn that would soon begin to grow. The tender grass was as soft as touching a little kitten's fur. "Finally!" she sighed. "Tomorrow, it's spring. I didn't think winter would ever end!"



**Units 11-14: Heat Wave**

Above the parked cars, / over street vendors' staccato rap, air ripples and shimmers / under the steady staring sun. / From bare feet-burning sidewalks, stale heat rises, / drifting and clotting. / In sticky lawn chairs / on porches overlooking the slowly shuffling traffic, / people sprawl in surrender. They try to stir the air / with wilting paper fans. They take slow sweet sips / of cool lemonade / and mouth the melting ice. Sweat drips down my face.

**LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 3****Units 3-6: On the Platform**

There is a tremor on the platform. There is a shadow in the cave. There is a crackling on the tracks. A hole as murky as a nightmare. / A home to strange creatures. From its darkness glare two eyes. / Glowing brighter / swelling as they fire forward, the eyes are those of a monster / charging from the cave / as if wounded, groaning in agony. Thundering closer, / it roars so loud that everything trembles and the air fills with its heat. / Now shrieking, it shoots into another dark cave and is gone. / "That was the express," explains / the mother to the child. / "We're waiting for the local."

**Unit 9: The Peacock and the Raven**

A peacock puffed up with pride when he met a raven one day. He spread his glorious tail and boasted, "My feathers are as colorful as a rainbow. Your feathers are dull like a rainy day." The raven nodded in agreement.

The raven then asked, "When you look at the sun above, what do you see?"

"When I look up, the sun is a bright yellow bead," answered the peacock.

The raven said, "When I soar high up in the sky, the sun is a giant flaming torch of light." The peacock looked confused.

The raven continued, "My feathers are colorless like dust, and my tail is as narrow as a carving knife. But, when I spread my wings, I am as free as the wind." The raven then soared far up into the sky while the peacock watched in awe and wonder.

**Units 11-14: Fireflies**

When he was young / (younger than you or I), / the yard was filled / with stars from the sky. / His hands were small / (too small to hold the light), / but he could run / and laugh with delight. / When he was tall / (and still wanted the stars), / he went out back, / with a net and a jar. / His hands were fast / (much faster than before). / He caught the light / and felt in charge of the world. / Then he grew old / (older than you or I). / Too weak to see / the stars in the sky. / He wished he could / Reclaim the time / When the fireflies / Weren't just in his mind.

**LEVEL 9 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 3-6: Ocean View**

About This Text:

In this story, the author Mary Segawa remembers a day spent at sea.

One bright day in early summer, two friends and I drove to a little seacoast town. Wandering along the harbor, we

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saw a sign for an afternoon boat cruise. We bought tickets and climbed aboard.

The motorboat held about ten passengers. Its captain explained that we would cross to another harbor and then return. We chugged out from the dock. Soon we left land behind. A few clouds lay scattered against the blue sky. Wavelets of blue-gray water rose and fell as if breathing.

Something happens when I'm in a boat on open water. It's as if a spell is cast. My senses are alert, but my thoughts vanish. If asked what I was thinking about, I would have said, "Nothing." Sunlight bounced on water. The air felt chilly and tasted of salt. The engine hummed steadily. I drifted into a new world. It was a world made of sky and sea.

After a while, the boat slowed, and the engine quieted. "Seals," said the captain.

The sight was as strange as a dream. Slick black shapes rose out of the water. There must have been twenty or more. They stirred in the wavelets like buoys. The heads of the males were large and horse-like. The females were smaller, their heads rounder. The seals surrounded the gently rocking boat. They had come to watch us. I watched them back with wonder. Their eyes were fearless, curious. Why had we wandered into their territory, they seemed to be asking. Then, by ones and twos, they dived into the darkness as silently as keepers of secrets. They were almost all gone by the time I remembered my camera.

The captain announced that he had just received a weather report. Lightning was nearby. A thunderstorm might be heading our way. It was too dangerous to stay on the water. We had to turn back to safe land. The tour was cut short, but nobody expressed disappointment. We had glimpsed something unexpected and mysterious. What more can someone ask from a boat ride?

### **Unit 9: The House on the Corner**

It was a dark and stormy night. The house on the corner, rundown and condemned by the city, seemed especially creepy. No one had lived there in years. But rumor had it the house wasn't actually empty. Something was in there. Curiosity had finally gotten the best of Aaron and his friends. Tonight, they would figure out what lurked inside that house. As they left their bikes on the lawn, they heard the wind pick up. They'd have to hurry before it began pouring.

"There it is," Max yelled. "I saw something move by the window on the second floor!"

Slowly, they opened the front door. All three boys winced as the hinges creaked. The noise must have startled whatever it was. They heard a whoosh and a thump. Then another thump.

"Forget it. Let's just turn back," Max said in a small, trembling voice.

Aaron was rattled too, but he didn't let it show. "No, we're already here. Don't be a chicken," he snapped.

"Yeah, he's right," Trevor agreed. "Let's find out."

They made their way cautiously up the stairs. Another thump came from the room at the end of the hall. They looked at each other wondering who would run back down the stairs first. No one made a move. Aaron took a step toward the door. "On the count of three," he whispered. "One, two, three!" He yanked the door open.

All at once they laughed with a mixture of relief and amusement. The creature wasn't terrifying at all. It was an old jacket hanging on a hook by the open window. The gusting wind was just strong enough to make the jacket flap against the sill.

"But...who does the jacket belong to?" Max wondered aloud just as the boys heard the sound of footsteps on the creaking stairs below.

**Units 11–14: The Rose That Grew From Concrete***By Tupac Shakur*

About This Text:

Rapper and poet Tupac Shakur has been described as one of the most important artists of all time. He was born in Harlem, New York, in 1971. He often wrote about being a young Black man in America. Tupac wrote the poem *The Rose That Grew from Concrete* when he was around 18 years old. In the poem, he compares himself to a rose. The poem suggests that Tupac overcame challenges to find greatness.

Did you hear about the rose that grew / from a crack in the concrete? / Proving nature's law is wrong it / learned to walk / with out having feet. / Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, / it learned to breathe fresh air. / Long live the rose that / grew from concrete / when no one else ever cared."

Did u hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete / Proving nature's laws wrong it learned 2 walk without having feet / Funny it seems but by keeping its dreams it learned 2 breathe fresh air / Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else even cared!

**LEVEL 9 | SKILL CHECK****Skill Check: Head Over Heels for Ice Skating**

In the 1998 Winter Olympics, the competition was fierce in female figure skating. A French skater named Surya Bonaly was competing against two other well-known ice skaters, both world champions. And she had to skate against them with an Achilles tendon injury. There were only three spaces on the Olympic podium, and the odds were stacked against her.

Bonaly took to the ice, hoping her injury wouldn't flare up when she needed to perform well on the international stage. As Bonaly propelled herself across the ice in her light blue and gold costume, she looked like she might achieve her goal. She wanted the Olympic medal she had dreamt of as a little girl.

Then, she fell while attempting a triple Lutz.

The crowd gasped. Bonaly quickly recovered, though the announcer sounded glum and uncertain. "Coming back from an Achilles injury is next to impossible," he said with a disappointed sigh.

At that moment, Bonaly knew this fall would keep her from a medal. With little left to lose, she decided to do something else next to impossible.

There are several tricks that are banned from ice skating competitions by the International Skating Union (ISU), which governs tournaments. The tricks are banned due to the potential for injury and for being too "showy." This refers to flashy tricks that the skating authorities deemed to be not artistic or technical enough. However, there is one banned trick that's both flashy and extremely difficult to complete safely: the backflip.

Banned in 1976, backflips are very rarely seen in ice skating competitions. Nonetheless, Bonaly knew that her dreams of an Olympic medal were over. So she wasn't worried about the big points deduction for banned tricks. Bonaly had been doing backflips for a long time. In fact, she'd been training so long that she learned to do what no skater before her had ever done. She could stick the landing on a single blade.

As Bonaly's time on the ice neared its end, she flung herself into the air, her feet going up and over her head. She landed on one foot, and the crowd roared. She received a standing ovation. After the performance, Bonaly bowed to the crowd with her back to the judges. This was a signal that although she knew she deserved a medal, she also knew she would not receive one.

After her final Olympic showing in 1998, Bonaly "turned pro." This meant that she performed in non-competition

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ice shows for the public. In these shows, there are no banned tricks, and creativity keeps audiences coming back. Bonaly skated professionally until 2015 when spinal problems forced her to retire. Today, she's a coveted figure skating coach.

Over 20 years after the backflip made her a legend, Bonaly has become an advocate on behalf of her fellow Black athletes in winter sports where they have been historically underrepresented. She works to educate the public and speaks about innovating in sports that are resistant to creativity and change.

Bonaly is known today for defying expectation and trusting her instincts. She completed a trick that many thought impossible. Decades later, people still remember this trick. Her backflip is perhaps more memorable than the winning routine.

### **Skill Check: Halftime Show**

Jordan held the unicycle awkwardly, trying to figure out how he was even going to mount the unusual piece of equipment. He'd joined the marching band because it seemed interesting. Coach Musa, the band teacher and volleyball coach, had assigned him to the cymbals. All he had to do was clang the copper disks at the right time. Well, Jordan thought that was all he had to do. Then, he learned that the highlight of the halftime show was that the two cymbalists must perform a choreographed high five while riding a unicycle.

Jordan assumed it was like riding a bicycle with one less wheel. He tried mounting the unicycle like he does a bicycle, by balancing with one foot on the pedal, then kicking off to gain speed by the time he placed his other foot on its pedal.

Unfortunately, the unicycle had other plans. When Jordan kicked off the ground, he immediately fell forward, the unicycle flying out from under him. He tried it again, this time thinking if he leaned further back, then the unicycle wouldn't end up behind him. He was right, but this time, he fell backward, and the unicycle sprang out in front of him.

Just then, Coach Musa came over. Jordan sighed as he stood up from the gym floor, brushing off his hands. He was exasperated from falling and beginning to feel begrudging towards the unicycle.

"Don't be too hard on yourself," Coach Musa said in response to Jordan's frustrated expression. "I know you'll get it, Jordan."

After falling a dozen more times, Jordan started feeling like all the practice in the world wouldn't make a difference. He wanted to learn this new skill. Yet he was starting to think it just wasn't possible.

"I'm seeing improvement!" Coach Musa rushed over after what seemed like the millionth fall. "How are you feeling?"

Jordan was in disbelief. How could he be improving? He hadn't even managed to go a few feet on the unicycle. Despite all this, Jordan nodded and replied, "I'm going to keep trying."

"I'm proud of you for not giving up. And, believe it or not, you learn something each time you fall."

Jordan was left to ponder his teacher's words. What had he learned from falling?

He needed to lean forward, but not too far forward. Balancing was easier when he was in motion. If he could keep his back straight, only lean forward slightly, and get a good push off the ground, it just might work.

Jordan tried it, and to his astonishment, he was able to pedal two times before falling over. He tried it again and was able to pedal three times—then five, then nine! Then he managed to pedal to the other side of the gym.

"You're learning so quickly!" Coach Musa shouted from the other side of the gym and clapped his hands loudly

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and encouragingly. Other band members also joined in and cheered.

Jordan still had a long way to go. He still had to learn how to turn. Eventually, he would have to master holding his cymbals and clapping in unison with the other cymbalist—all while balancing on the unicycle.

For now, Jordan was glad that he did not give up and that Coach Musa had believed in him. When he left the gym that day, he hummed a jazzy tune and skipped to the nearby bus stop. And as he rode the bus, he gazed out the sunny window. His mind was floating with thoughts of starring in the halftime show with the whole band behind him.

## LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: The Decision

When Percy came home, he saw a large envelope on the kitchen table. It was from Penstock Academy and addressed to him. His heart began beating faster. He ripped open the envelope and read quickly. “I got the scholarship!” he shouted to his mother.

“I’m so proud of you,” Momma said over and over, hugging Percy tightly.

Penstock Academy! Mr. Montoya, the guidance counselor at Percy’s middle school, had helped Percy apply to Penstock. It was a highly respected but expensive boarding school. Percy had never visited, because it was about a thousand miles away. But the photos showed stately brick buildings and vast green lawns with tall trees. The students lived in dormitories and ate in dining halls. Penstock Academy gave full scholarships to students “with promise.” That’s what Mr. Montoya had explained. And now Percy was in! His heart was still pounding.

“Why are you crying?” Percy asked Momma. “Tears of joy,” she answered.

That night, Percy looked over the Penstock materials. Mr. Montoya would help him fill out all the forms. A booklet showed photos of smiling students on campus. Percy wondered if most of those students were rich. Maybe they came from families where everyone attended boarding schools. Percy felt a stab of fear.

He realized that Momma’s tears weren’t just from joy. She was crying because she would miss him. And he’d be a thousand miles away from her and the rest of his family and friends. Most of his classmates would go to North High. He’d know nobody at Penstock. Why had he ever been excited about going to that school?

Percy barely slept that night. At school the next day, he stopped at Mr. Montoya’s office. “I got a full scholarship to Penstock Academy,” he said.

“I’m not surprised, Percy,” Mr. Montoya said, smiling broadly. “They’re looking for strong students like you. Penstock gives scholarships to about twenty percent of each entering class.”

“But I might not go,” Percy said.

Mr. Montoya nodded. “Well, you don’t have to decide this minute.” He showed Percy how to set up a pros and cons chart. “Take time to think and make your lists.”

So Percy made a chart.

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**Pros**

- an honor to be accepted opportunity of a lifetime excellent education prepare for college
- feel independent
- get to know new part of country tackle new challenges
- meet kids from all over the world
- can always come home if I don't like it

**Cons**

- might be homesick
- might feel like an outsider
- my family would miss me

Mr. Montoya was right. Percy's chart helped him make his decision.

**Unit 9: Noah's Difficult Choice**

It was snowing heavily and Noah could barely see the road in front of him. He slowed his speed and tightened his grip on the steering wheel. Suddenly, the car in front of him began to swerve. Noah let out a gasp as he watched the car veer off the road. He heard the loud crash when it slammed into a tree. Noah pulled over cautiously. The driver of the other car probably needed help. But it was dark and the storm was getting worse. On top of that, Noah had just gotten his license and had never driven in snow before. He worried that if he stopped now he might not make it home. He searched frantically for his phone but could not locate it. He thought about his choices. *Should I get out and see if I can help? Do I wait for someone else to stop?*

**Units 11-14: Avalanche!**

The morning climb up the snowy mountain trail was strenuous but satisfying. Sophie and her brother always liked the challenge of winter hiking. At the summit, they ate lunch, rested briefly, and headed down. They needed to reach the base before sunset. About halfway down, they came to a fork in the trail. "I can't remember. Do we go left or right?" Sophie asked. Mark wasn't sure either. They headed right.

The path opened to a snowfield. Immediately, Sophie sensed danger. Rumbling sounds from above meant only one thing. Avalanche! Her insides churned. A loosened mass of snow was already charging down the slope!

Sophie looked for a tree to cling to, but a wall of white hid everything. She knew she should drop her pack, but there was no time. She was supposed to swim on top of the moving snow, but that was impossible. The snow waves tossed her into the air like a floppy rag. Spinning helplessly, Sophie slammed against snow and ice. Then, with a jolt of pain, she stopped. Her pack had caught in a tree. She dangled from a low branch as the mountain quieted. I'm the luckiest person in the world, she thought. She carefully released her pack and dropped onto the soft snow.

"Mark! Mark!" Sophie shouted as she stepped slowly along the edge of the slope. When she spotted Mark's red cap, she crawled over to him. He lay under a thin blanket of snow, his arm broken and his face bloody. He looked at her, dazed. "I'm going for help," she said. She wrapped her own parka around him and put on the sweatshirt stashed in her pack. Then back through a line of trees, she found the main trail, and quickly built a rock cairn to mark the spot.

A climb down a trail was always faster than the climb up, but Sophie had never gone this fast before. I hope my luck holds out, she thought as she leaped from rock to rock. Panting and sweating, she suddenly stood still. Was that loud buzz a motor? She ran toward it and cried with relief— a ranger's snowmobile!

It took two hours for rescuers to reach Mark. He had a broken arm, a broken ankle, and a broken nose. At the hospital, Sophie was surprised to learn she needed ten stitches in her chin. She hadn't even realized she was injured.



## LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: The Shepherd and the Ogre

Once upon a time, there was a brave young shepherd. He played the flute as he tended his sheep in the hills. His music was so beautiful that it cast a spell on all who listened. Even wolves lay down to sleep among the lambs when they heard the magical sounds of the shepherd's flute. The shepherd was a real charmer.

Now, as in other tales like this one, there was an ogre. This ogre lived in a cave near the sheep's grazing land. Like other ogres, he was a giant with a fondness for human flesh. So one day, as the shepherd headed down the hillside, the ogre charged out of his cave. In three leaps, he snatched the shepherd in his mighty hands. The ogre slung our helpless hero over his shoulder and headed back to the cave to fry up dinner.

As noted, the shepherd was brave. Of course, he'd been startled when the ogre attacked. But he had bravely held onto his flute. So when the ogre put him down and began to prepare the fire, the shepherd started tooting. And sure enough, the ogre quickly felt the effects of the enchanting music. The ogre's eyes fluttered and closed. His tree-trunk-sized legs shook with weakness. WHOMP! He toppled over. The ogre's huge body dropped right on top of the shepherd. This was not a good thing. A final squeak from the flute signaled the end of our unlucky hero.

Moral: Bravery and talent are not always enough.

### Unit 9: The Bear and the Bees

A bear was roaming through the forest when his nose caught a whiff of his favorite treat—honey. His nose led him to a beehive in a tree. Just then, three bees returned home and stung him on the nose to keep him from the honey. The bear lost his temper. He began to claw at the tree to destroy the beehive. His actions brought the whole swarm of bees out of the hive. The bear began to run hard and fast to save himself. He came to a river with a log floating down it. The bear took a gigantic leap and landed right on the log. He had successfully escaped from the bees. Sadly, the log sank and the bear washed away.

### Unit 9: Maggie & Buddy

Maggie loved her dog, Buddy, but he was always in trouble! Once, he chased the neighbor's chickens into the street. Another time, he stole Maggie's lunch right off her plate! One day, Maggie was horrified to find Buddy had shredded the couch cushions!

"That's it, Buddy," Maggie said sternly as she cleaned up the room. "You're going to obedience school."

When class ended three weeks later, Buddy wagged his tail with pride as the instructor gave Maggie his certificate. Maggie planned to give Buddy his favorite snack as a reward for his good behavior. When they got home, Maggie sighed as she noticed that the chewed paper on the seat next to Buddy was his obedience certificate!

### Units 11-14: A Man, a Boy, and a Donkey

A Man and his son once were going with their Donkey to market. As they walked along by the Donkey's side, a countryman passed them and said: "You fools, what is a Donkey for but to ride upon?"

So the Man put the Boy on the Donkey, and they went on their way. But soon they passed a group of men, one of whom said: "See that lazy youngster; he lets his father walk while he rides."

So the Man ordered his Boy to get off and got on himself. But they hadn't gone far when they passed two women, one of whom said to the other: "Shame on that lazy oaf to let his poor little son trudge along."

Well, the Man didn't know what to do, but at last he put the Boy on the Donkey with him. By this time they had come to

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the town, and the passers-by began to jeer and point at them. The Man stopped and asked what they were laughing at. The men said: "Aren't you ashamed of yourself for overloading that poor Donkey of yours—you and your son?"

The Man and Boy got off and tried to think what to do. They thought and they thought, till at last they cut down a pole, tied the Donkey's feet to it, and raised the pole and the Donkey to their shoulders. They went along amid the laughter of all who met them till they came to Market Bridge, when the Donkey, getting one of his feet loose, kicked out and caused the Boy to drop his end of the pole. In the struggle the Donkey fell over the bridge, and his front feet being tied together, he was drowned.

"That will teach you," said an old man who had followed them: "Please all, and you will please none."

## LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 3-6: The Way Ahead: A Campaign Speech

My friends and classmates, I am so happy, so grateful, to see you all here. I would like to start by thanking each and every one of you for listening to my campaign speech. For those of you new to the school, I'm Janet Oliver, the president of our Student Council.

It's been almost a year since you decided that this school needed a change. You wanted a change because your school was in trouble. The Student Council's finances were a mess. Student activities did not have the funds they needed. Your cafeteria was neglected. Papers were overflowing the trash bins. Athletic events were canceled for lack of planning. No wonder you wanted a change! So you elected me Student Council president. Now, let me give the reasons why I deserve your vote for another term as the best qualified leader of this school. Since I've been president, change has come to our school. Look around. Do you eat in a newly painted cafeteria? Yes! Do your classrooms have recycling bins? Yes! Do you see championship banners in the gym? Yes! We have more money to spend on student activities. The video game club now has dozens of new games. Our courtyard—once bleak and empty—is now a hotspot for volleyball tournaments. I am proud. I'm proud of all of us and our school!

Of course, I didn't do all this alone. Many, many individuals and groups have worked long hours to help me bring these changes. To all the dedicated members of the Student Council, I say thank you! To our hardworking teachers and administrators, I say thank you! To the generous parent volunteers who serve in so many ways, I say thank you! To you, the student body of our beloved school, I say thank you! Thank you for sharing my vision of change!

My fellow students, now is the time to look for the way ahead. We can join together on this path. The way ahead brings a plan for affordable student athlete fees. The way ahead includes strategies for a bigger science lab. The way ahead means bringing new technology to the school. I know I can make it happen! There are so many great opportunities for us as we set off for the way ahead.

Thank you all for your support. Now, get out there and vote for The Way Ahead!

### Unit 10: Hungry?

Hungry? Tired of waiting until lunch time? Do you crave fast, delicious food delivered to you in seconds no matter where you are? Are you at school? We deliver! At home? We deliver! Standing in the parking lot? Yay, we deliver there too! People like us deserve to eat when and where we want to! Don't we? Well, my friend, now you can finally have what you've always wanted with new Ten-or-Less food delivery service. Just place your order and count to 10. We'll be there. Try it now! You'll love it!



**Units 11-14: Support Peasley Animal Shelter**

Dear Friend:

Let us introduce you to Frankie. Frankie's owner died, and this sweet-tempered dog was brought to Peasley Shelter by neighbors. Here, Frankie has meals and a bed. She has space to run around. She waits in safety for a human family and a loving home. Is Frankie waiting for you?

Meet Jojo. This beautiful cat was found under a bench at Peasley Park. He was shivering in the rain and covered in fleas. He received a warm welcome at Peasley Shelter. With skillful care, he is safe and healthy. Now, he's waiting. Is Jojo waiting for you?

We need your help today. Frankie and Jojo are just two of the animals awaiting adoption at Peasley Shelter. The animals can't ask for your help, so we are writing to ask for them. We are a local nonprofit organization. We've been taking in homeless dogs and cats since 1985. In those years, we have fed, sheltered, and provided medical care for tens of thousands of animals. Our belief is that every animal deserves a full and healthy life. Our mission is to find loving homes for all the animals at Peasley Shelter.

These animals desperately need a family to love. Could that family be yours? We need your help today. Our most frequently asked question is: "How can I help if I can't adopt?" Even if you are unable to adopt a pet from Peasley, you can still help us. We depend on the generosity of neighbors like you to keep our programs running. A contribution of any amount will be put to good use in giving our animals a chance for a better life.

We need your help today. Our need for funds is great. But there are other ways you can help Peasley Shelter continue fulfilling its mission.

**VOLUNTEER:** We have many volunteer opportunities, from office work to dog walking, to giving cuddles. Volunteers do not need to make a big time commitment. Can you spare just a few hours a month to give needy animals the attention they deserve? Sign up now!

**DONATE:** We always need towels, blankets, and pet toys. We also appreciate collars, leashes, water bowls, and cat litter. Paper towels and cleaning supplies are on our wish list.

We need your help today. Open your home, your heart, or your wallet to support Peasley Animal Shelter. For more information about adoption, volunteering, and donations, visit us at [www.Peasley4Paws.org](http://www.Peasley4Paws.org).

Demetrios Pappas

Outreach Coordinator, Peasley Animal Shelter

**LEVEL 10 | ACTIVITY 4****Units 3-6: Lights Out!**

Throughout the world, BILLIONS of travelers are on the move. Yet we barely notice them. I'm talking about bird migration. Many birds travel between winter and summer homes. Most migrating birds fly at night. Unfortunately, the bright lights of cities can bring death. But there is a way to protect migrating birds. It's an Audubon Society program called Lights Out.

The problem of bird deaths from building lights is bigger than most of us realize. In some cities, volunteers walk at dawn to collect dead birds for scientific study. Bird-death statistics are gathered from such studies. In a single year, buildings kill an estimated 304 million birds in North America! That is far more than from any other human-made cause.

According to bird scientists, bright lights cause migrating birds to lose their sense of direction. As ornithologist Chris Leahy points out, "birds perish from exhaustion as they circle around the lit towers, struggling to escape." Or the birds may land on sidewalks. After resting, they try to fly through the clear glass windows all around them. They crash and die.

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The Lights Out program asks owners of tall office buildings to turn off lights at night, especially during the migration seasons. The program is based on one that began in Toronto, Canada, in 1993. Since then, more than 20 big cities in North America have adopted Lights Out. It works! A study of just one Chicago skyscraper showed that bird deaths decreased by 80 percent when lighting was turned off.

Some building owners think of birds as pests. Pigeon droppings, for example, are an unattractive, unhealthy problem. But these owners may not be aware that most birds dying nightly are not city dwellers. They include dozens of species of songbirds that are just passing through.

Finally, turning off lights does not just benefit birds. It reduces energy costs for building owners. And energy conservation benefits the environment. In Indianapolis, the leader of a group of building owners doubted the program's usefulness. But after Lights Out was tried, he saw results. "It has turned out to be a win-win proposition," he said.

Lights Out is a win-win proposition. Lights Out benefits birds. It benefits the environment. It benefits all of us. I hope you will support it.

### **Unit 9: Good for You**

Music is good for the human brain. Playing and listening to music has many benefits. Research shows that learning to play a musical instrument increases fine motor skills and attention. Listening to upbeat music produces positive feelings. Additionally, Doctor Otto Hilton says, "Listening to music enhances memory even in older patients with memory loss." Furthermore, a recent study showed that listening to classical music for just 15 minutes improved student performance on IQ tests. Both playing and listening to music have many positive effects on the mind.

### **Unit 10: Dogs Are Great!**

Dogs make great companions. People who have pet dogs live happier and healthier lives. Many studies in recent years show that pet ownership directly impacts the owner's happiness. A recent university study showed that just five minutes of petting a dog releases the hormones in the brain responsible for happiness. "Owning a dog also increases interaction with other people, which can lead to an improved sense of wellbeing," says Doctor Angela Cooper. The positive impact of pet ownership on health has been scientifically proven. In 1999, Swedish researchers found that young children who lived with a pet dog had fewer allergies. Additionally, walking a pet dog has been shown to contribute to lower blood pressure, which reduces the chances of a heart attack. Not only do dogs make excellent pets, they help their owners feel great and live longer.

### **Units 11-14: A Carless City Center**

Many cities have pedestrian malls. These are streets closed to almost all vehicles. People breathe cleaner air. They stroll or bike while getting in shape. They shop without having to search for parking. Pedestrian malls are usually small areas. Imagine an entire city center without cars! Banning cars from the city center would improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

To begin, a carless city center brings health benefits. The World Health Organization reports that air pollution causes 7 million deaths yearly. Restricting car use in cities improves air quality. New Delhi, India, is one example. In that city, each vehicle may operate only every other day. A similar ban was imposed in Beijing, China. There, people were amazed to see blue sky! Without cars, people walk and bike more. The American Heart Association (AHA) encourages this. According to the AHA, exercise lowers blood pressure as effectively as medication.

Furthermore, a city center without cars helps the local economy. For instance, when cities build bike paths and lanes, bike-sharing businesses spring up. Shopping at local businesses increases. Dining at local restaurants increases, too. The owner of Paws 'n' Claws, a pet supply store, agrees. In fact, he reports, "Last year, the city

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said no to cars in the center. Ever since, sales have gone through the roof. Up 65 percent!" A study in Denmark compared the costs of using cars and bicycles to get around the city. It concluded that the "cost of car driving is more than six times higher than cycling."

If personal cars are banned, the quality of urban life will improve. Is this life for you? Imagine no harmful exhaust fumes. Imagine people walking and biking instead of sitting in their cars. Imagine stress-free shopping and dining. Imagine a carless future!

## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: What Was the Space Shuttle? (Smithsonian)

On April 12, 1981, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) launched the space shuttle.

#### What Did the Space Shuttle Do?

The space shuttle was NASA's space transportation system. It carried astronauts and cargo into space and flew around, or orbited, Earth. The space shuttle made its final landing on July 21, 2011. During the 30 years it was in active use, the space shuttle launched on 135 missions.

The space shuttle carried as many as seven astronauts at a time to and from space. In all, 355 people flew on the shuttle. Some of them flew more than one time. During its history, the space shuttle flew many different types of missions. It launched satellites and served as an orbiting science laboratory. Its crews repaired and improved other spacecraft, such as the Hubble Space Telescope. The shuttle also flew missions for the military. On its later missions, the space shuttle was mostly used to work on the International Space Station.

#### What Were the Parts of the Space Shuttle?

The space shuttle had three main parts. The first part was the orbiter. The orbiter was the large, white space plane where the crew lived and worked. It was the only part of the shuttle that flew into orbit. The orbiter also had a payload bay for carrying cargo into orbit. Five different orbiters took turns flying into space. The second part of the shuttle was the external tank. This was the large orange fuel tank that was attached to the bottom of the orbiter for launch. The third part was actually two pieces. A pair of white solid rocket boosters provided most of the thrust for the first two minutes of a shuttle launch. The solid rocket boosters were long and thin.

#### How Did the Space Shuttle Launch and Land?

The space shuttle took off like a rocket. The solid rocket boosters and the main engines on the orbiter provided the thrust, or push, for launch. The solid rocket boosters burned for about two minutes. Then the boosters dropped from the shuttle and fell into the ocean. Special boats brought them back so they could be used again. The shuttle's main engines fired for another six minutes. The external tank dropped off the orbiter and then burned up in Earth's atmosphere. At this point, the shuttle and its crew were in orbit.

The orbiter landed like a glider. While in orbit, it fired its engines to slow down. After re-entering Earth's atmosphere, it glided in for a landing on a runway. When the orbiter touched down on the runway, a parachute opened to help slow it down.

### Unit 8: Fruits Rock!

Fruits are amazing in many ways. Fruits are healthful. They have vitamins. They reduce the risk of disease. Fruits are plentiful. There are between 1,000 and 2,000 different kinds. They make up a large part of farming production. Fruits are not just for eating. Some fruits can be used as natural dyes. Bayberries can be used to make candles.

**Unit 9: Whoa, Hold Your Seahorses!**

They have a tail and a head that looks somewhat like a horse. They live in the sea. So, seahorse is not a totally unexpected name for this unique fish that is found in seas around the world. Seahorses are bony fish that do not have scales like other fish. Their bodies are covered with a thin skin. The skin covers rings of bony plates. Seahorses swim upright—like they are standing and swimming at the same time. However, this unusual swimming position means they are not fast swimmers. The seahorse has a prehensile tail. Prehensile means able to grasp. A seahorse can use its tail to grasp and hold onto a piece of seaweed to stay in one place. This is how it hides from enemies.

**Units 11–14: Biologists Discover Skydiving Spiders (Smithsonian)**

A group of scientists working in Panama and Peru have made an interesting discovery. It's a nocturnal hunting spider with a special skill. The spider is able to steer while falling. That means it can glide from tree to tree.

**Gliding to Safety**

"My guess is that many animals living in the trees are good at aerial gliding," says biology professor Robert Dudley. "If a predator comes along, gliding frees the animal to jump if it has a time-tested way of gliding to the nearest tree rather than landing in the understory or in a stream."

Forest floor predators or fish could quickly make a meal of any insect that falls from a tree. The newly discovered spider is the only gliding arachnid they found. Other spiders just fell to the ground or into the water below. There, they were eaten by predators.

**Built to Glide**

Professor Dudley has been studying gliding insects in tropical forests for over a decade. His group studied 59 individual spiders that all belong to the same species. These spiders were physically well-adapted to gliding. They are "wafer thin and flexible," says Dudley. They maneuver by spreading their legs wide in order to steer themselves toward the tree trunk when they fall. If they fall upside down, they're able to right themselves in midair. The scientists occasionally saw spiders bounce off the trunk. The spiders were able to recover and glide back again for a successful landing.

By studying these unusual types of animal behavior, Dudley said, scientists may be able to supply new ideas for robots that can right themselves when falling."

**LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 2****Units 3–6: "Eleven"**

*An excerpt from the short story by Sandra Cisneros*

What they don't understand about birthdays and what they never tell you is that when you're eleven, you're also ten, and nine, and eight, and seven, and six, and five, and four, and three, and two, and one. And when you wake up on your eleventh birthday you expect to feel eleven, but you don't. You open your eyes and everything's just like yesterday, only it's today. And you don't feel eleven at all. You feel like you're still ten. And you are—underneath the year that makes you eleven.

Like some days you might say something stupid, and that's the part of you that's still ten. Or maybe some days you might need to sit on your mama's lap because you're scared, and that's the part of you that's five. And maybe one day when you're all grown up maybe you will need to cry like if you're three, and that's okay. That's what I tell Mama when she's sad and needs to cry. Maybe she's feeling three.

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Because the way you grow old is kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like my little wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year inside the next one. That's how being eleven years old is.

You don't feel eleven. Not right away. It takes a few days, weeks even, sometimes even months before you say Eleven when they ask you. And you don't feel smart eleven, not until you're almost twelve. That's the way it is.

Only today I wish I didn't have only eleven years rattling inside me like pennies in a tin Band-Aid box. Today I wish I was one hundred and two instead of eleven because if I was one hundred and two I'd have known what to say when Mrs. Price put the red sweater on my desk. I would've known how to tell her it wasn't mine instead of just sitting there with that look on my face and nothing coming out of my mouth.

"Whose is this?" Mrs. Price says, and she holds the red sweater up in the air for all the class to see. "Whose? It's been sitting in the coatroom for a month."

"Not mine," says everybody. "Not me."

"It has to belong to somebody," Mrs. Price keeps saying, but nobody can remember. It's an ugly sweater with red plastic buttons and a collar and sleeves all stretched out like you could use it for a jump rope. It's maybe a thousand years old and even if it belonged to me I wouldn't say so. Maybe because I'm skinny, maybe because she doesn't like me, that stupid Sylvia Saldivar says, "I think it belongs to Rachel." An ugly sweater like that, all raggedy and old, but Mrs. Price believes her. Mrs. Price takes the sweater and puts it right on my desk, but when I open my mouth nothing comes out.

"That's not, I don't, you're not...Not mine," I finally say in a little voice that was maybe me when I was four.

"Of course it's yours," Mrs. Price says. "I remember you wearing it once." Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not.

Not mine, not mine, not mine, but Mrs. Price is already turning to page thirty-two, and math problem number four. I don't know why but all of a sudden I'm feeling sick inside, like the part of me that's three wants to come out of my eyes, only I squeeze them shut tight and bite down on my teeth real hard and try to remember today I am eleven, eleven. Mama is making a cake for me tonight, and when Papa comes home everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you."

### **Unit 8: Ice Covered Deserts**

You may know that all deserts are dry. But did you know they can be either very hot or very cold? Some deserts are covered with sand and some are covered with ice! The largest hot desert on Earth is the Sahara Desert. The largest cold desert on Earth is Antarctica. Most deserts have animals and plants. But, living things in the two different kinds of deserts are not the same!

### **Unit 9: Frogs at the Well**

On one summer day, two very hot and thirsty frogs looked for water. At last, they came to a well. The bold frog said, "Let's jump in. There could be water in there."

The careful frog replied, "What if there isn't any water in the well? We could get stuck!"

The bold frog said, "Come on! We have nothing to lose. I think we should jump in!"

Before long, the frogs hopped away from the well, feeling refreshed and no longer thirsty.

**Units 11-14: "Eleven"**

*An excerpt from the short story by Sandra Cisneros*

Previously in Eleven

It is Rachel's eleventh birthday. Rather than feeling excited about her special day, Rachel is left feeling embarrassed and upset when her teacher, Mrs. Price, thinks that an old, ugly red sweater belongs to her. Rachel tries to explain that the ugly sweater is not hers, but the teacher will not listen to her and leaves the ugly red sweater on Rachel's desk.

But when the sick feeling goes away and I open my eyes, the red sweater's still sitting there like a big red mountain. I move the red sweater to the corner of my desk with my ruler. I move my pencil and books and eraser as far from it as possible. I even move my chair a little to the right. Not mine, not mine, not mine.

In my head I'm thinking how long till lunchtime, how long till I can take the red sweater and throw it over the school yard fence, or even leave it hanging on a parking meter, or bunch it up into a little ball and toss it in the alley. Except when math period ends Mrs. Price says loud and in front of everybody, "Now Rachel, that's enough," because she sees I've shoved the red sweater to the tippy- tip corner of my desk and it's hanging all over the edge like a waterfall, but I don't care.

"Rachel," Mrs. Price says. She says it like she's getting mad. "You put that sweater on right now and no more nonsense."

"But it's not—"

"Now!" Mrs. Price says.

This is when I wish I wasn't eleven, because all the years inside of me—ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two and one—are pushing at the back of my eyes when I put one arm through one sleeve of the sweater that smells like cottage cheese, and then the other arm through the other and stand there with my arms apart like if the sweater hurts me and it does, all itchy and full of germs that aren't even mine.

That's when everything I've been holding in since this morning, since when Mrs. Price put the sweater on my desk, finally lets go, and all of a sudden I'm crying in front of everybody. I wish I was invisible but I'm not. I'm eleven and it's my birthday today and I'm crying like I'm three in front of everybody. I put my head down on the desk and bury my face in my stupid clown-sweater arms.

My face all hot and spit coming out of my mouth because I can't stop the little animal noises from coming out of me, until there aren't any more tears left in my eyes, and it's just my body shaking like when you have the hiccups, and my whole head hurts like when you drink milk too fast.

But the worst part is right before the bell rings for lunch. That stupid Phyllis Lopez, who is even dumber than Sylvia Saldivar, says she remembers the red sweater is hers! I take it off right away and give it to her, only Mrs. Price pretends like everything's okay.

Today I'm eleven. There's cake Mama's making for tonight, and when Papa comes home from work we'll eat it. There'll be candles and presents and everybody will sing Happy birthday, happy birthday to you, Rachel, only it's too late.

I'm eleven today. I'm eleven, ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, and one, but I wish I was one hundred and two. I wish I was anything but eleven, because I want today to be far away already, far away like a runaway balloon, like a tiny o in the sky, so tiny-tiny you have to close your eyes to see it.



## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 3-6: Hatchet

*An excerpt from the book by Gary Paulsen*

Before this excerpt:

Brian Robeson is a thirteen year old boy who finds himself lost in the Canadian wilderness. His plane crashed into a nearby lake after traveling many miles from its scheduled path. Brian has only his hatchet and his wits to help him survive. He is hungry, afraid, and unprepared for all of the challenges he will encounter in the wilderness. After a difficult day trying to build a shelter, he finally falls asleep.

At first he thought it was a growl. In the still darkness of the shelter in the middle of the night his eyes came open and he was awake and he thought there was a growl. But it was the wind, a medium wind in the pines had made some sound that brought him up, brought him awake. He sat up and was hit with the smell.

It terrified him. The smell was one of rot, some musty rot that made him think only of graves with cobwebs and dust and old death. His nostrils widened and he opened his eyes wider but he could see nothing. It was too dark, too hard dark with clouds covering even the small light from the stars, and he could not see. But the smell was alive, alive and full and in the shelter. He thought of the bear, thought of Bigfoot and every monster he had ever seen in every fright movie he had ever watched, and his heart hammered in his throat.

Then he heard the slithering. A brushing sound, a slithering brushing sound near his feet—and he kicked out as hard as he could, kicked out and threw the hatchet at the sound, a noise coming from his throat. But the hatchet missed, sailed into the wall where it hit the rocks with a shower of sparks, and his leg was instantly torn with pain, as if a hundred needles had been driven into it. “Unnnngh!”

Now he screamed, with the pain and fear, and skittered on his backside up into the corner of the shelter, breathing through his mouth, straining to see, to hear.

The slithering moved again, he thought toward him at first, and terror took him, stopping his breath. He felt he could see a low dark form, a bulk in the darkness, a shadow that lived, but now it moved away, slithering and scraping it moved away and he saw or thought he saw it go out of the door opening.

He lay on his side for a moment, then pulled a rasping breath in and held it, listening for the attacker to return. When it was apparent that the shadow wasn’t coming back he felt the calf of his leg, where the pain was centered and spreading to fill the whole leg.

His fingers gingerly touched a group of needles that had been driven through his pants and into the fleshy part of his calf. They were stiff and very sharp on the ends that stuck out, and he knew then what the attacker had been. A porcupine had stumbled into his shelter and when he had kicked it the thing had slapped him with its tail of quills.

He touched each quill carefully. The pain made it seem as if dozens of them had been slammed into his leg, but there were only eight, pinning the cloth against his skin. He leaned back against the wall for a minute. He couldn’t leave them in, they had to come out, but just touching them made the pain more intense.

So fast, he thought. So fast things change. When he’d gone to sleep he had satisfaction and in just a moment it was all different. He grasped one of the quills, held his breath, and jerked. It sent pain signals to his brain in tight waves, but he grabbed another, pulled it, then another quill. When he had pulled four of them he stopped for a moment. The pain had gone from being a pointed injury pain to spreading in a hot smear up his leg and it made him catch his breath.

Some of the quills were driven in deeper than others and they tore when they came out. He breathed deeply twice, let half of the breath out, and went back to work. Jerk, pause, jerk—and three more times before he lay back in

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the darkness, done. The pain filled his leg now, and with it came new waves of self-pity. Sitting alone in the dark, his leg aching, some mosquitoes finding him again, he started crying. It was all too much, just too much, and he couldn't take it. Not the way it was. I can't take it this way, alone with no fire and in the dark, and next time it might be something worse, maybe a bear, and it wouldn't be just quills in the leg, it would be worse. I can't do this, he thought, again and again. I can't. Brian pulled himself up until he was sitting upright back in the corner of the cave. He put his head down on his arms across his knees, with stiffness taking his left leg, and cried until he was cried out.

He did not know how long it took, but later he looked back on this time of crying in the corner of the dark cave and thought of it as when he learned the most important rule of survival, which was that feeling sorry for yourself didn't work. It wasn't just that it was wrong to do, or that it was considered incorrect. It was more than that—it didn't work. When he sat alone in the darkness and cried and was done, all done with it, nothing had changed. His leg still hurt, it was still dark, he was still alone and the self-pity had accomplished nothing.

At last he slept again, but already his patterns were changing and the sleep was light, a resting doze more than a deep sleep, with small sounds awakening him twice in the rest of the night.

### Unit 10: Spring

Cassandra marked off another day on her calendar as her countdown to spring. She pictured spring in her mind. The birds twittering announced its arrival. She could feel the sun warming her cheeks and a light breeze tickling her nose. The air had that wonderfully earthy scent of new life. The budding trees were dotted with tiny splashes of color that were about to explode. Her mouth watered just thinking about juicy strawberries and sweet corn that would soon begin to grow. The tender grass was as soft as touching a little kitten's fur. "Finally!" she sighed. "Tomorrow, it's spring. I didn't think winter would ever end!"

### Units 11–14: Hatchet

*An excerpt from the book by Gary Paulsen*

Before this excerpt

Brian Robeson is a thirteen year old boy who finds himself lost in the Canadian wilderness. His plane crashed into a nearby lake after traveling many miles from its scheduled path. Brian has only his hatchet and his wits to help him survive. He is hungry, afraid, and unprepared for all of the challenges he will encounter in the wilderness. After 47 days in the wilderness, he is still learning many difficult lessons about survival.

Mistakes.

Small mistakes could turn into disasters, funny little mistakes could snowball so that while you were still smiling at the humor you could find yourself looking at death. In the city if he made a mistake usually there was a way to rectify it, make it all right. If he fell on his bike and sprained a leg he could wait for it to heal; if he forgot something at the store he could find other food in the refrigerator.

Now it was different, and all so quick, all so incredibly quick. If he sprained a leg here he might starve before he could get around again; if he missed while he was hunting or if the fish moved away he might starve. If he got sick, really sick so he couldn't move he might starve.

Mistakes.

Early in the new time he had learned the most important thing, the truly vital knowledge that drives all creatures in the forest—food is all. Food was simply everything. All things in the woods, from insects to fish to bears, were always, always looking for food—it was the great, single driving influence in nature. To eat. All must eat.

But the way he learned it almost killed him. His second new night, stomach full of fish and the fire smoldering in the shelter, he had been sound asleep when something—he thought later it might be smell—had awakened him.

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Near the fire, completely unafraid of the smoking coals, completely unafraid of Brian, a skunk was digging where he had buried the eggs. There was some sliver of a moon and in the faint-pearl light he could see the bushy tail, the white stripes down the back, and he had nearly smiled. He did not know how the skunk had found the eggs, some smell, perhaps some tiny fragment of shell had left a smell, but it looked almost cute, its little head down and its little tail up as it dug and dug, kicking the sand back.

But those were his eggs, not the skunk's, and the half smile had been quickly replaced with fear that he would lose his food and he had grabbed a handful of sand and thrown it at the skunk.

"Get out of here..."

He was going to say more, some silly human words, but in less than half a second the skunk had snapped its rear end up, curved the tail over, and sprayed Brian with a direct shot aimed at his head from less than four feet away.

In the tiny confines of the shelter the effect was devastating. The thick sulfurous rotten odor filled the small room, heavy, ugly, and stinking. The corrosive spray that hit his face seared into his lungs and eyes, blinding him.

He screamed and threw himself sideways, taking the entire wall off the shelter; screamed and clawed out of the shelter and fell-ran to the shore of the lake. Stumbling and tripping, he scrambled into the water and slammed his head back and forth trying to wash his eyes, slashing at the water to clear his eyes.

A hundred funny cartoons he had seen about skunks. Cute cartoons about the smell of skunks, cartoons to laugh at and joke about, but when the spray hit there was nothing funny about it—he was completely blind for almost two hours. A lifetime. He thought that he might be permanently blind, or at least impaired—and that would have been the end. As it was the pain in his eyes lasted for days, bothered him after that for two weeks. The smell in the shelter, in his clothes, and in his hair was still there now, almost a month and a half later.

And he had nearly smiled.

Mistakes.

Food had to be protected. While he was in the lake trying to clear his eyes the skunk went ahead and dug up the rest of the turtle eggs and ate every one. Licked all the shells clean and couldn't have cared less that Brian was thrashing around in the water like a dying carp. The skunk had found food and was taking it and Brian was paying for a lesson.

## LEVEL 11 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: Beyond Baseball

Roberto Clemente Walker was born on August 18, 1934, in Carolina, Puerto Rico. He was the fifth and last child of Melchor Clemente and Luisa Walker. From his early childhood, Roberto showed signs of great athletic ability. At school, he won competitions. Once, he tossed the javelin 190 feet. But baseball was his passion.

At age 18, Clemente joined the Puerto Rican professional baseball league. In 1952, he signed a contract that paid \$40 per week. He was given a signing bonus of \$400. His skills improved as he played and he attracted the attention of major league scouts. In February of 1954, Clemente signed with his first major league baseball team—the Brooklyn Dodgers!

The following year, legendary baseball executive Branch Rickey nabbed Clemente from the Brooklyn Dodgers and moved him to the Pittsburgh Pirates. Roberto heard the news while he was back in Puerto Rico. He later admitted, "I didn't even know where Pittsburgh was."

In addition to a strange language and a new culture, Clemente also faced racism and discrimination. In one of his first games as a professional, he protested angrily when fans yelled racial insults at one of his teammates.

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His relationship with the press was also marked by racial tension. Some members of the press were rude simply because he was black and Latino. Clemente later became a union leader in the Major League Baseball Players Association. He defended players' rights to demand better working conditions and benefits.

Clemente's batting and baserunning made him a powerhouse. Of all his gifts, his throwing awed fans and observers most. He possessed one of the most powerful and accurate arms in the history of the game. Clemente received a Most Valuable Player Award, 12 Gold Glove Awards, 4 National League batting titles, 12 All-Star Game selections, 2 World Series Championships, and reached the 3,000-hit milestone.

On December 23, 1972, a massive earthquake devastated the Nicaraguan capital of Managua. 7,000 people died and thousands more were injured. Roberto lost many friends in the quake.

Roberto accepted the chairmanship of an earthquake relief committee and used local media to appeal for help. He worked day and night to raise a total of \$150,000. The committee gathered and shipped nearly 26 tons of food, clothing and medicine by air and sea. Then reports came in that the corrupt government of General Anastasio Somoza was stealing the deliveries.

Roberto wanted to make sure the food and medicine got to the people who needed it. So on New Year's Eve of 1972, he helped load supplies onto an aging DC-7 plane and boarded the flight. One of the plane's engines exploded almost immediately after take-off. There were two more explosions. After a fourth explosion, the plane crashed. The search for survivors lasted nearly two weeks. The pilot's ruined body was eventually recovered. The remains of two crewmembers, Clemente, and his friend Rafael Lozano were never found.

Clemente is remembered as a professional baseball player who ranks among the best of all time. However, Clemente is also remembered for his fierce ethnic pride. He saw his career in baseball as a way to help Latin Americans—especially underprivileged Puerto Ricans—make their lives better.

Clemente's name has been used for stadiums, schools, hospitals, and highways in Puerto Rico, the United States, Nicaragua, and places as distant as Germany. In Puerto Rico, an award in his name is given at public schools to those who excel as athletes, students, and citizens.

The legend of Roberto Clemente began through his actions both on and off the baseball field. His tragic death further highlighted the way he lived and lifted his image to that of an icon.

### **Unit 8: First in Space**

Valentina Tereshkova was born in 1937 in Russia. At age 16, she left school to work in a factory. Valentina was a fearless skydiver and became interested in space. She didn't have experience as a pilot. But, she was one of only five women accepted into the Soviet space program. During training, she passed difficult tests. She had to be alone for long periods of time and handle conditions with no gravity. In 1963, Valentina became the very first woman to fly to space. Thanks to her brave actions and clever thinking, she solved a serious problem during the flight. Valentina received several honors and awards for her accomplishments. She has inspired many young women interested in space exploration.

### **Unit 9: Superstar and Role Model**

Laurie Hernandez was born on June 9, 2000. As a young girl growing up in New Jersey, Laurie became interested in gymnastics. There were not many Latina girls at the gym where she practiced day after day. Her long hours of practice and determination paid off. She won both a gold and a silver medal at the 2016 Summer Olympics. On November 22, 2016, she became the youngest winner of the TV show *Dancing with the Stars*. Her autobiography was published on January 24, 2017. Today, Laurie says her greatest accomplishment is being a role model for other Latina girls.



## Units 11–14: Octavia Butler

Octavia Butler was an African American science fiction writer. Science fiction (“sci-fi”) is a genre based on imaginary events that include science, technology, or the future. Butler was one of the first authors to publish sci-fi stories with strong Black, female characters. When speaking about including Black characters in her work, Butler said, “I wrote myself in, since I’m me and I’m here and I’m writing.”

### Early Life

Butler was born in California on June 22, 1947. Her father died when she was young, so her mother and grandmother raised her. Tall and timid, Butler was an avid reader from a young age and was interested in science. She had dyslexia, which often made schoolwork difficult, but it did not stop her love of reading and writing. Butler’s mother encouraged this love and bought her a typewriter for her eleventh birthday.

When she was 12, Butler saw a sci-fi film about an alien from Mars who comes to Earth. This experience inspired her to write science fiction stories. Butler said watching the film helped her understand two things: that someone was paid to write that story, and that she could write a better one. Science fiction provided a new way for her to escape into her own world, or imagine a new one.

### Published Writer

In 1968, Butler graduated from Pasadena City College. After college, she lived in Los Angeles, where she continued to write and work. During that time, she held different jobs. For example, she worked as a warehouse worker, a dishwasher, and a potato chip inspector. Butler was a diligent writer, waking early each morning to write before work. She attended the highly-respected Clarion Workshop in 1970. There, she improved her writing with other writers and editors. Six years later, Butler published her first book.

### Famous Works

Butler wanted to bring more sci-fi books to readers and wrote with adults in mind. She authored 12 novels. Her books are set in the past, present, and even the future.

In Butler’s most well-known book, *Kindred*, Dana Franklin travels back in time to the southern United States during the 1800s. There, Dana is mistaken for an enslaved woman. Through Dana, readers can examine the severe hardships Black people experienced during that time. Published in 1979, the book continues to gain new readers with more than 500,000 copies in print.

Butler’s *Parable of the Sower* (1993) is set in the future. In the book, Lauren Olamina’s community is damaged and harmed. Yet Lauren, a Black teenager and strong leader, survives and creates a new community for herself and her followers.

### Legacy

Throughout her career as a writer, Butler won many awards. In 1995, she won the MacArthur Fellowship. She was the first science fiction writer to receive this award. Butler says receiving the award encouraged more people to read her work. After becoming a published author, Butler became a teacher at the same Clarion Workshop she had attended as a student. She told her students they can write interesting stories if they write about topics they are passionate about. Butler died in 2006, but her legacy lives on. Her work paved the way for many writers, and her influence is still felt today in science fiction. With Butler as a role model, others continue to write themselves into their own stories.



## LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: Basketball Forecast

In a perfect arc, it soars / and falls through the net / as sure as rainfall in springtime. Shot back again, it zigzags / passed here, there, once more / like a lightning bolt among the clouds. Spinning around the rim, / it is an orange tornado. / Blasting across the court, / it is a mighty gale. / Its bouncing beat— / roof-pounding, ground-beating hail. The cheers of the fans— / rumbling, roaring thunder. / The forces of nature hold court here: power, motion, beauty.

### Unit 9: The Peacock and the Raven

A peacock puffed up with pride when he met a raven one day. He spread his glorious tail and boasted, "My feathers are as colorful as a rainbow. Your feathers are dull like a rainy day." The raven nodded in agreement.

The raven then asked, "When you look at the sun above, what do you see?"

"When I look up, the sun is a bright yellow bead," answered the peacock.

The raven said, "When I soar high up in the sky, the sun is a giant flaming torch of light." The peacock looked confused.

The raven continued, "My feathers are colorless like dust, and my tail is as narrow as a carving knife. But, when I spread my wings, I am as free as the wind." The raven then soared far up into the sky while the peacock watched in awe and wonder.

### Units 11-14: Percussion Blues

I signed up to play the drums... A snare, / as crisp and light / as a new bag of chips. A bass, / as full and rich / as a bowlful of ice cream. Cymbals, / as sharp and sour / as homemade lemonade. / They gave me something else... A glockenspiel, / as unknown and forgettable / as mystery meat in the cafeteria. / The chimes, / as weak and unsatisfying / as cucumber soup in wintertime. And a triangle, / the raw cauliflower / of the percussion section. / Maybe I should have signed up for / a cooking class.

## LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: Wonder

*An excerpt from the book by R.J. Palacio*

Previously in Wonder:

Ten year-old August Pullman was born with a facial deformity. Because of this facial deformity, August has had a number of surgeries, which have kept him from attending school with other kids. In this excerpt, August is attending school for the first time.

Via had warned me about lunch in middle school, so I guess I should have known it would be hard. I just hadn't expected it to be this hard. Basically, all the kids from all the fifth-grade classes poured into the cafeteria at the same time, talking loudly and bumping into one another while they ran to different tables. One of the lunchroom teachers said something about no seat-saving allowed, but I didn't know what she meant and maybe no one else did, either, because just about everybody was saving seats for their friends. I tried to sit down at one table, but the kid in the next chair said, 'Oh, sorry, but somebody else is sitting here.'

So I moved to an empty table and just waited for everyone to finish stampeding and the lunchroom teacher to tell us what to do next. As she started telling us the cafeteria rules, I looked around to see where Jack Will was sitting,

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but I didn't see him on my side of the room. Kids were still coming in as the teachers started calling the first few tables to get their trays and stand on line at the counter. Julian, Henry, and Miles were sitting at a table toward the back of the room.

Mom had packed me a cheese sandwich, graham crackers, and a juice box, so I didn't need to stand on line when my table was called. Instead, I just concentrated on opening my backpack, pulling out my lunch bag, and slowly opening the aluminum-foil wrapping of my sandwich.

I could tell I was being stared at without even looking up. I knew that people were nudging each other, watching me out of the corners of their eyes. I thought I was used to those kinds of stares by now, but I guess I wasn't.

There was one table of girls that I knew were whispering about me because they were talking behind their hands. Their eyes and whispers kept bouncing over to me.

I hate the way I eat. I know how weird it looks. I had a surgery to fix my cleft palate when I was a baby, and then a second cleft surgery when I was four, but I still have a hole in the roof of my mouth. And even though I had jaw-alignment surgery a few years ago, I have to chew food in the front of my mouth. I didn't even realize how this looked until I was at a birthday party once, and one of the kids told the mom of the birthday boy he didn't want to sit next to me because I was too messy with all the food crumbs shooting out of my mouth. I know the kid wasn't trying to be mean, but he got in big trouble later, and his mom called my mom that night to apologize. When I got home from the party, I went to the bathroom mirror and started eating a saltine cracker to see what I looked like when I was chewing. The kid was right. I eat like a tortoise, if you've ever seen a tortoise eating. Like some prehistoric swamp thing.

### **Unit 8: The Ant and the Dove**

An ant fell into a stream and struggled to reach the shore. A dove saw the ant in danger. The dove dropped a leaf in the stream. The ant climbed on the leaf and floated to shore. She felt grateful for the dove's kindness. Later, a hunter was getting ready to shoot the dove. The ant saw the dove in danger. The ant bit the hunter on the heel. He cried out in pain, and the dove flew to safety. She felt grateful for the ant's kindness.

### **Unit 9: The Farmer and His Sons**

Just before a farmer died, he told his sons that there was treasure hidden on their land. He didn't know the exact spot, but it was there. If they worked hard, they would find the treasure. As soon as the farmer died, the sons began to dig up their land. The sons worked hard in the hot sun of summer and into the chilling rains of fall. When they had dug up all the land and the winter snow began to fall, they hadn't found the treasure.

When winter ended, the sons looked over the land that they had worked hard on. They saw new plants growing everywhere. In the fall, they harvested more crops than they had ever harvested before. They sold them and became very rich. The sons finally understood that because they worked hard, they had found the treasure—the crops.

### **Units 11-14: Wonder**

*An excerpt from the book by R.J. Palacio*

Previously in Wonder:

Ten year-old August Pullman was born with a facial deformity. Because of this facial deformity, August has had a number of surgeries, which have kept him from attending school with other kids. In the previous excerpt, August realized just how horrible lunch at middle school can be when he was forced to sit alone. The reader learns that August had jaw surgery and, as a result, eats differently than most people.

"Hey, is this seat taken?"

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I looked up, and a girl I never saw before was standing across from my table with a lunch tray full of food. She had long wavy brown hair, and wore a brown T-shirt with a purple peace sign on it. "Uh, no," I said.

She put her lunch tray on the table, plopped her backpack on the floor, and sat down across from me. She started to eat the mac and cheese on her plate. "Ugh," she said after swallowing the first bite. "I should have brought a sandwich like you did." "Yeah," I said, nodding.

"My name is Summer, by the way. What's yours?"

"August."

"Cool," she said.

"Summer!" Another girl came over to the table carrying a tray. "Why are you sitting here? Come back to the table."

"It was too crowded," Summer answered her. "Come sit here. There's more room."

The other girl looked confused for a second. I realized she had been one of the girls I had caught looking at me just a few minutes earlier: hand cupped over her mouth, whispering. I guess Summer had been one of the girls at that table, too.

"Never mind," said the girl, leaving.

Summer looked at me, shrugged-smiled, and took another bite of her mac and cheese.

"Hey, our names kind of match," she said as she chewed.

I guess she could tell I didn't know what she meant.

"Summer? August?" she said, smiling, her eyes open wide, as she waited for me to get it.

"Oh, yeah," I said after a second.

"We can make this the 'summer only' lunch table," she said. "Only kids with summer names can sit here. Let's see, is there anyone here named June or July?"

"There's a Maya," I said.

"Technically, May is spring," Summer answered, "but if she wanted to sit here, we could make an exception." She said it as if she'd actually thought the whole thing through. "There's Julian. That's like the name Julia, which comes from July."

I didn't say anything.

"There's a kid named Reid in my English class," I said.

"Yeah, I know Reid, but how is Reid a summer name?" she asked.

"I don't know." I shrugged. "I just picture, like, a reed of grass being a summer thing."

"Yeah, okay." She nodded, pulling out her notebook. "And Ms. Petosa could sit here, too. That kind of sounds like the word 'petal,' which I think of as a summer thing, too."

"I have her for homeroom," I said.

"I have her for math," she answered, making a face.

She started writing the list of names on the second-to-last page of her notebook. "So, who else?" she said.

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By the end of lunch, we had come up with a whole list of names of kids and teachers who could sit at our table if they wanted. Most of the names weren't actually summer names, but they were names that had some kind of connection to summer. I even found a way of making Jack Will's name work by pointing out that you could turn his name into a sentence about summer, like 'Jack will go to the beach,' which Summer agreed worked fine.

"But if someone doesn't have a summer name and wants to sit with us," she said very seriously, "we'll still let them if they're nice, okay?"

"Okay." I nodded. "Even if it's a winter name."

"Cool beans," she answered, giving me a thumbs-up.

Summer looked like her name. She had a tan, and her eyes were green like a leaf.

## LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 3-6: The Man Who Couldn't Remember

Henry Molaison died in 2008 at the age of 82. He was famous, though few people knew his name. Until his death, Henry was known only by his initials, to protect his privacy. For decades, neuroscientists, who study the brain and nervous system, had been reporting about their research with "H.M."

When Henry was ten years old, he began suffering from epilepsy. Epilepsy is a disorder that involves sudden bursts of electrical energy in the brain that cause seizures. For Henry, these seizures grew in strength over the years. When he was in high school, they were severe. At any time, he might lose consciousness, fall to the ground, and lie with muscles jerking. Doctors prescribed powerful medications, but the seizures continued.

A neurosurgeon offered an experimental operation to treat the epilepsy. Henry was 27 when he decided to undergo the surgery. The surgeon drilled through Henry's skull. He carefully sliced away tissue from deep inside each half of the brain. The removed sections came from both temporal lobes. Each section included a structure called the hippocampus.

As a result of the operation, Henry's seizures were reduced. But something essential had been taken from him. He lost the ability to form new memories. He still had some memories of his life before the operation. But he could not remember what he ate for breakfast or where he had gone the day before. No matter how many times he met someone, each meeting was new to him. He understood what was said to him, but he could not hold onto the information for more than a few seconds. When asked how long he had trouble remembering things, he said, "I can't tell you because I don't remember."

Henry remained a gentle, friendly, intelligent person with a good sense of humor. He enjoyed doing crossword puzzles and watching movies. But without the ability to form memories, Henry could not learn new things or navigate his world. He needed care for the rest of his life.

The general term for memory loss is amnesia. Amnesia may result from brain injury or disease. Sometimes amnesia is temporary. In Henry's case, it was permanent. And because it occurred after removal of the hippocampus in both lobes, neuroscientists gained understanding of the work these structures perform. They discovered that the hippocampus and its neighboring regions enable the processes that change short-term memories into long-term ones. Without a hippocampus, the brain cannot hold onto a memory for more than thirty seconds.

Henry's surgeon later called the operation "a tragic mistake." He warned other surgeons against removal of the hippocampal structures. Yet Henry understood that his case was valuable to science—even if that understanding

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came to him again and again and again. He said about doctors, "What they find out about me helps them to help other people. And that's more important." He agreed to donate his brain for scientific study. After his death, his brain tissues were carefully preserved. Through microscopic studies, scientists may expand their knowledge of how brain cells and pathways build memories in healthy brains.

Neuroscientist Suzanne Corkin knew Henry well. She studied him for 46 years. In a book published in 2013, she wrote, "Henry's disability, a tremendous cost to him and his family, became science's gain." She called her famous subject "a collaborator—a prized partner in our larger quest to understand memory."

### **Unit 9: A Man and His Donkey**

A man once owned a donkey. The man was a hard-working man. But, his donkey was always trying to avoid work. One day the donkey was carrying bags of salt for the man to sell. The bags were heavy. The donkey accidentally fell into the river. The salt dissolved in the water, and his load became lighter. So, every day for a week, the donkey purposefully fell into the river. Because the man could not sell the salt, he decided to teach the donkey a lesson. Therefore, he filled the bags with cotton. When the donkey fell into the river, the cotton absorbed the water and, as a result, the bags became unbearably heavy. The donkey almost drowned. Consequently, the donkey never fell into the river again.

### **Units 11-14: Day of Terror**

On an island in the Gulf of Alaska, a soccer ball washed up on the beach. On the ball was Japanese writing. The ball had been floating across the vast Pacific Ocean for more than a year, swept into the water on March 11, 2011. On that date, death, destruction, and suffering came to northeast Japan.

#### **Earthquake**

The island nation of Japan has experienced many deadly earthquakes. One lesson learned from those disasters is the importance of preparation. Schools hold earthquake drills, so that everyone can seek safety in an orderly way. There are strict rules for constructing earthquake-safe buildings. Because Japan's earthquake-detecting technology is the best in the world, alerts are sent almost instantly.

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake struck—the strongest to hit Japan since record-keeping began. Its epicenter was about 40 miles off the coast. The quake arrived with a noisy roar and lasted a terrifying six minutes. The ground shook. Objects slid and crashed. Walls cracked and roofs caved in. Buildings swayed, but most stayed upright. The worst was yet to come.

#### **Tsunami**

The word tsunami comes from Japanese, meaning "harbor wave." A tsunami is a series of ocean waves with enormous power. An earthquake is a common cause. The waves travel in deep water as fast as a jet aircraft. They are not dangerous until they reach shallower water near shore. There, they slow down and rise to enormous heights. The waves can reach far inland, flooding everything in their path.

Japan has protective measures in place. Giant concrete seawalls keep back the water. Warning systems give people time to seek shelter in safe places.

Immediately after the March 11 earthquake, coastal areas prepared for a tsunami. Fishermen ran to the harbor to take their boats out to sea for safety. Many people climbed to higher ground. But nobody was prepared for the horror that arose about thirty minutes after the earthquake. Nobody expected such a monstrous tsunami! Cold, dark water crushed seawalls and covered rooftops. It raced miles inland, even up hills, devouring vehicles, buildings, and anyone in its way. Whole towns were washed away. Survivors shivered in the chilly air, shocked by what they had witnessed, and fearful about loved ones.

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### Aftermath

About 19,000 people died. Most were drowned by the tsunami. Water flooded a nuclear power plant near the coast. Electricity was knocked out as a result, damaging the cooling system. That, in turn, caused the fuel to overheat. Overheating had the devastating effect of releasing deadly radiation into the air and sea. Workers risked their lives and health to contain the meltdown. But a huge zone around the nuclear power plant became too dangerous to live in. Eleven towns had to be emptied of people.

About a year later, debris carried off by the ocean began to land on the west coast of North America. Among the objects was a soccer ball. The writing on it led to the discovery of its owner. The ball was returned to teenager Misaki Murakami. He had survived the tsunami by running to higher ground. His family's home was destroyed. The soccer ball was a special object, a gift from classmates years earlier. It was the only possession that he or his family recovered from that terrible day.

## LEVEL 12 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: *The Diary of Anne Frank*

*An excerpt from the play by Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett*

#### Characters

MR. FRANK

MRS. FRANK

MIEP

MARGOT FRANK

MRS. VAN DAAN

ANNE FRANK

MR. VAN DAAN

Mr. KRALER

PETER VAN DAAN

MR. DUSSEL

About Anne Frank. This play is written by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett. The play is based on the diary of a young Jewish girl named Anne Frank who lived in Europe during the second World War. When Anne was young, the Nazis gained control of many European countries. The Nazis wanted to eliminate people they saw as different from them, especially Jewish people. They took away people's rights and sent as many Jews as they could to prisons called concentration camps. To save their lives, some Jews tried to hide. In July of 1942, Anne Frank's family, the Van Daan family, and Mr. Dussel, went into hiding together. They hid in a small attic. Once there, they were not allowed to leave for any reason. They relied on the help of two non-Jewish people, Mr. Kraler and Miep, who were helping hide them. Mr. Kraler and Miep brought them food and news of the outside world.

An excerpt from:

ACT II SCENE I

[In the darkness we hear ANNE'S VOICE, again reading from the diary.]

ANNE'S VOICE. Saturday, the first of January, nineteen forty-four. Another new year has begun and we find ourselves still in our hiding place. We have been here now for one year, five months, and twenty-five days. It seems that our life is at a standstill.

[The curtain rises on the scene. It is late afternoon. Everyone is bundled up against the cold. In the main room MRS. FRANK is taking down the laundry which is hung across the back. MR. FRANK sits in the chair down left,

*continued on next page*





reading. MARGOT is lying on the couch with a blanket over her and the many-colored knitted scarf around her throat. ANNE is seated at the center table, writing in her diary. PETER, MR. and MRS. VAN DAAN and DUSSEL are all in their own rooms, reading or lying down. As the lights dim on, ANNE'S VOICE continues, without a break.]

ANNE'S VOICE. We are all a little thinner. The Van Daans' "discussions" are as violent as ever. Mother still does not understand me. But then I don't understand her either. There is one great change, however. A change in myself. I read somewhere that girls of my age don't feel quite certain of themselves. . . .

[We hear the chimes and then a hymn being played on the carillon outside. The buzzer of the door below suddenly sounds. Everyone is startled. MR. FRANK tiptoes cautiously to the top of the steps and listens. Again the buzzer sounds, in MIEP's V-for-Victory signal.]

MR. FRANK. It's Miep!

[He goes quickly down the steps to unbolt the door. MRS. FRANK calls upstairs to the VAN DAANS and then to PETER.]

MRS. FRANK. Wake up, everyone! Miep is here!

[ANNE quickly puts her diary away. MARGOT sits up, pulling the blanket around her shoulders. MR. DUSSEL sits on the edge of his bed, listening, disgruntled. MIEP comes up the steps, followed by MR. KRALER. They bring flowers, books, newspapers, etc. ANNE rushes to MIEP, throwing her arms affectionately around her.]

Miep . . . and Mr. Kraler . . . What a delightful surprise!

MR. KRALER. We came to bring you New Year's greetings.

MRS. FRANK. You shouldn't . . . you should have at least one day to yourselves. [She goes quickly to the stove and brings down teacups and tea for all of them.]

ANNE. Don't say that, it's so wonderful to see them! [Sniffing at MIEP's coat] I can smell the wind and the cold on your clothes.

MIEP. [Giving her the flowers] There you are. [Then to MARGOT, feeling her forehead] How are you, Margot? . . . Feeling any better?

MARGOT. I'm all right.

ANNE. We filled her full of every kind of pill so she won't cough and make a noise. [She runs into her room to put the flowers in water. MR. and MRS. VAN DAAN come from upstairs. Outside there is the sound of a band playing.]

MRS. VAN DAAN. Well, hello, Miep. Mr. Kraler.

MR. KRALER. [Giving a bouquet of flowers to MRS. VAN DAAN] With my hope for peace in the New Year.

PETER. [Anxiously] Miep, have you seen Mouschi? Have you seen him anywhere around?

MIEP. I'm sorry, Peter. I asked everyone in the neighborhood had they seen a gray cat. But they said no.

[MRS. FRANK gives MIEP a cup of tea. MR. FRANK comes up the steps, carrying a small cake on a plate.]

MR. FRANK. Look what Miep's brought for us!

MRS. FRANK. [Taking it] A cake!

MR. VAN DAAN. A cake! [He pinches MIEP's cheeks gaily and hurries up to the cupboard.] I'll get some plates.

[DUSSEL, in his room, hastily puts a coat on and starts out to join the others.]

MRS. FRANK. Thank you, Miepia. You shouldn't have done it. You must have used all of your sugar ration for

*continued on next page*



weeks. [Giving it to MRS. VAN DAAN] It's beautiful, isn't it?

MRS. VAN DAAN. It's been ages since I even saw a cake. Not since you brought us one last year.

[Without looking at the cake, to MIEP] Remember? Don't you remember, you gave us one on New Year's Day? Just this time last year? I'll never forget it because you had "Peace in nineteen forty- three" on it. [She looks at the cake and reads] "Peace in nineteen forty-four!"

MIEP. Well, it has to come sometime, you know. [As DUSSEL comes from his room] Hello, Mr. Dussel.

MR. KRALER. How are you?

MR. VAN DAAN. [Bringing plates and a knife] Here's the knife, liefje. Now, how many of us are there?

MIEP. None for me, thank you.

MR. FRANK. Oh, please. You must.

MR. FRANK. Please, please! [Then to MIEP] You see what a little sugar cake does to us? It goes right to our heads!

MR. VAN DAAN. [Handing MRS. FRANK the knife] Here you are, Mrs. Frank.

MRS. FRANK. Thank you. [Then to MIEP as she goes to the table to cut the cake] Are you sure you won't have some?

MIEP. [Drinking her tea] No, really, I have to go in a minute.

[The sound of the band fades out in the distance.]

PETER. [To MIEP] Maybe Mouschi went back to our house . . . they say that cats . . . Do you ever get over there . . . ? I mean . . . do you suppose you could . . . ?

MIEP. I'll try, Peter. The first minute I get I'll try. But I'm afraid, with him gone a week . . .

DUSSEL. Make up your mind, already someone has had a nice big dinner from that cat!

[PETER is furious, inarticulate. He starts toward DUSSEL as if to hit him. MR. FRANK stops him. MRS. FRANK speaks quickly to ease the situation.]

MRS. FRANK. [To MIEP] This is delicious, Miep!

MRS. VAN DAAN. [Eating hers] Delicious!

MR. VAN DAAN. [Finishing it in one gulp] Dirk's in luck to get a girl who can bake like this!

MIEP. [Putting down her empty teacup] I have to run. Dirk's taking me to a party tonight.

ANNE. How heavenly! Remember now what everyone is wearing, and what you have to eat and everything, so you can tell us tomorrow.

MIEP. I'll give you a full report! Good-bye, everyone!

## Unit 9: The Sun and the Wind

### Act 1

[Sun and Wind are standing on the right side of the stage. A traveler enters from the other side of the stage. The traveler is wearing a cape. Sun and Wind watch as the traveler moves to the center of the stage and sits down.]

WIND. Look, Sun. There's a traveler. Let's have some fun.

SUN. What?

*continued on next page*



WIND. Let's see who can make the traveler take off his cape.

SUN. What will I get if I win?

WIND. You will be the best of the best.

SUN. Ok, you go first."

### Act 2

[Wind moves to center stage and stands beside the traveler.]

WIND. I will make the traveler take off his cape in no time. Whhhh!

SUN. Wind, the traveler still has his cape on. Try harder!

WIND. I'll try harder. WHHHHHH!!!

SUN. Look, he still has his cape on. In fact, he is wrapping it tighter around him.

### Act 3

[Wind returns to the right of the stage. Sun moves to the center of the stage beside the traveler.]

SUN. Now, watch this, Wind!

[Sun holds his breath and shines.]

WIND. Nothing yet!

SUN. I'll try harder.

[Sun holds his breath and shines harder. The traveler finally takes off his cape.]

WIND. Oh, my! You win!!

## Units 11-14: *The Diary of Anne Frank*

*An excerpt from the play by Frances Goodrich & Albert Hackett*

### Characters

MR. FRANK

MIEP

MRS. VAN DAAN

MR. VAN DAAN

PETER VAN DAAN

MRS. FRANK

MARGOT FRANK

ANNE FRANK

MR. KRALER

MR. DUSSEL

Before this excerpt:

Everyone was excited to see Miep and Mr. Kraler, who stopped by with cake and flowers. However, their excitement quickly turned into an argument when Mr. Dussel believed that Mr. Van Daan would get a larger slice of cake than everyone else. Everyone was tense, bored, and tired of being confined to the small room with one another.

An excerpt from:

*continued on next page*



## ACT II SCENE I

MARGOT. Sometimes I wish the end would come . . . whatever it is.

MRS. FRANK. [Shocked] Margot!

[ANNE goes to MARGOT, sitting beside her on the couch with her arms around her.]

MARGOT. Then at least we'd know where we were.

MRS. FRANK. You should be ashamed of yourself! Talking that way! Think how lucky we are! Think of the thousands dying in the war, every day. Think of the people in concentration camps.

ANNE. [Interrupting] What's the good of that? What's the good of thinking of misery when you're already miserable? That's stupid!

MRS. FRANK. Anne!

[As ANNE goes on raging at her mother, MRS. FRANK tries to break in, in an effort to quiet her.]

ANNE. We're young, Margot and Peter and I! You grownups have had your chance! But look at us . . . If we begin thinking of all the horror in the world, we're lost! We're trying to hold onto some kind of ideals . . . when everything . . . ideals, hopes . . . everything, are being destroyed! It isn't our fault that the world is in such a mess! We weren't around when all this started! So don't try to take it out on us! [She rushes off to her room, slamming the door after her. She picks up a brush from the chest and hurls it to the floor. Then she sits on the settee, trying to control her anger.]

MR. VAN DAAN. She talks as if we started the war! Did we start the war? [He spots ANNE'S cake. As he starts to take it, PETER anticipates him.]

PETER. She left her cake.

[He starts for ANNE's room with the cake. There is silence in the main room. MRS. VAN DAAN goes up to her room, followed by MR. VAN DAAN. DUSSEL stays looking out the window. MR. FRANK brings MRS. FRANK her cake. She eats it slowly, without relish. MR. FRANK takes his cake to MARGOT and sits quietly on the sofa beside her. PETER stands in the doorway of ANNE's darkened room, looking at her, then makes a little movement to let her know he is there. ANNE sits up, quickly, trying to hide the signs of her tears. PETER holds out the cake to her.]

You left this.

ANNE. [Dully] Thanks.

[PETER starts to go out, then comes back.]

PETER. I thought you were fine just now. You know just how to talk to them. You know just how to say it. I'm no good . . . I never can think . . . especially when I'm mad . . . That Dussel . . . when he said that about Mouschi . . . someone eating him . . . all I could think is . . . I wanted to hit him.

I wanted to give him such a . . . a . . . that he'd . . . That's what I used to do when there was an argument at school . . . That's the way I . . . but here . . . And an old man like that . . . it wouldn't be so good.

ANNE. You're making a big mistake about me. I do it all wrong. I say too much. I go too far. I hurt people's feelings . . .

[DUSSEL leaves the window, going to his room.]

PETER. I think you're just fine . . . What I want to say . . . if it wasn't for you around here, I don't know. What I mean . . .

*continued on next page*



[PETER is interrupted by DUSSEL's turning on the light. DUSSEL stands in the doorway, startled to see PETER. PETER advances toward him forbiddingly. DUSSEL backs out of the room. PETER closes the door on him.]

ANNE. Do you mean it, Peter? Do you really mean it?

PETER. I said it, didn't I?

ANNE. Thank you, Peter!

[In the main room. MR. and MRS. FRANK collect the dishes and take them to the sink, washing them. MARGOT lies down again on the couch. DUSSEL, lost, wanders into PETER's room and takes up a book, starting to read.]

PETER. [Looking at the photographs on the wall] You've got quite a collection.

ANNE. Wouldn't you like some in your room? I could give you some. Heaven knows you spend enough time in there . . . doing heaven knows what . . .

PETER. It's easier. A fight starts, or an argument . . . I duck in there.

ANNE. You're lucky, having a room to go to. His lordship is always here . . . I hardly ever get a minute alone. When they start in on me, I can't duck away. I have to stand there and take it.

PETER. You gave some of it back just now.

ANNE. I get so mad. They've formed their opinions . . . about everything . . . but we . . . we're still trying to find out . . . We have problems here that no other people our age have ever had. And just as you think you've solved them, something comes along and bang! You have to start all over again.

PETER. At least you've got someone you can talk to.

ANNE. Not really. Mother . . . I never discuss anything serious with her. She doesn't understand. Father's all right. We can talk about everything . . . everything but one thing. Mother. He simply won't talk about her. I don't think you can be really intimate with anyone if he holds something back, do you?

PETER. I think your father's fine.

ANNE. Oh, he is, Peter! He is! He's the only one who's ever given me the feeling that I have any sense. But anyway, nothing can take the place of school and play and friends of your own age . . . or near your age . . . can it?

PETER. I suppose you miss your friends and all.

ANNE. It isn't just . . . [She breaks off, staring up at him for a second.] Isn't it funny, you and I? Here we've been seeing each other every minute for almost a year and a half, and this is the first time we've ever really talked. It helps a lot to have someone to talk to, don't you think? It helps you to let off steam.

PETER. [Going to the door] Well, any time you want to let off steam, you can come into my room. ANNE. [Following him] I can get up an awful lot of steam. You'll have to be careful how you say that. PETER. It's all right with me.

ANNE. Do you mean it?

PETER. I said it, didn't I?

[He goes out. ANNE stands in her doorway looking after him. As PETER gets to his door he stands for a minute looking back at her. Then he goes into his room. DUSSEL rises as he comes in, and quickly passes him, going out. He starts across for his room. ANNE sees him coming, and pulls her door shut. DUSSEL turns back toward PETER'S room. PETER pulls his door shut. DUSSEL stands there, bewildered, forlorn. The scene slowly dims out. The curtain falls on the scene. ANNE'S VOICE comes over in the darkness . . . faintly at first, and then with growing strength.]

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ANNE'S VOICE. We've had bad news. The people from whom Miep got our ration books have been arrested. So we have had to cut down on our food. Our stomachs are so empty that they rumble and make strange noises, all in different keys. Mr. Van Daan's is deep and low, like a bass fiddle. Mine is high, whistling like a flute. As we all sit around waiting for supper, it's like an orchestra tuning up. It only needs Toscanini to raise his baton and we'd be off in the Ride of the Valkyries. Monday, the sixth of March, nineteen forty-four. Mr. Kraler is in the hospital. It seems he has ulcers. Pim says we are his ulcers. Miep has to run the business and us too.

The Americans have landed on the southern tip of Italy. Father looks for a quick finish to the war. Mr. Dussel is waiting every day for the warehouse man to demand more money. Have I been skipping too much from one subject to another? I can't help it. I feel that spring is coming. I feel it in my whole body and soul. I feel utterly confused. I am longing . . . so longing . . . for everything . . . for friends . . . for someone to talk to . . . someone who understands . . . someone young, who feels as I do . . .

[As these last lines are being said, the curtain rises on the scene. The lights dim on. ANNE'S VOICE fades out.]

## LEVEL 12 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: The Fungal Network

We often stroll past trees and admire their leaves and branches. They are a prominent pillar in nature and in many city landscapes. They are also home to many incredible creatures. Yet rarely do we think about the part of the tree that we cannot see. The unseen part is actually the most intriguing. Below the ground, there is an intricate world where trees interact. Through interconnected roots, trees "talk" and "mingle", sharing information about threats and discussing ways to protect themselves. And sometimes, believe it or not, trees wage war against one another.

This underground network is composed of fungi. We encounter fungi in our daily lives—they are everywhere! You may have even seen fungi in your garden or in a forgotten bag of bread in your kitchen cabinet. Fungi and trees have a long established relationship. Fungi gather nutrients from the ground and offer them to trees through the root system. In return, they receive carbon-rich sugars made by trees through photosynthesis, a process of generating food which fungi are not capable of doing themselves.

In this way, the fungal network is much like the human brain's neural system; many connections exist between many different parts. The brain sends messages along its many connections to help the rest of the body function. Likewise, fungi also acts as a connection between the root systems of different trees.

In 2021, Suzanne Simard, a professor at the University of British Columbia in Canada, conducted research on how forest trees "talk" and "hear." "I call it 'the language of the trees,'" says Simard. The fungal network makes this all possible. Simard studied a Douglas fir tree that had recently been harmed by insects. It turns out that the Douglas fir "talked" to a nearby pine tree by sending chemical warning signals through the root system. Upon "hearing" the warning, the pine tree could now defend itself against the threat of those harmful insects.

Often, older trees share sugars, carbon, water, and other nutrients with nearby seedlings. This process helps them grow. And conversely, when a tree is close to dying, it can drop its remaining resources into the soil. From there, younger trees can pocket those resources and use them to their own advantage.

As beneficial as the fungal network may appear, it also has an interesting dark side. Some flowers, such as orchids, have been known to steal resources from healthy trees by connecting through the fungi. In doing so, orchids boost their own health and can better fend off attacks from insects. When it comes to the appropriately nicknamed "Wood Wide Web," the black walnut tree might be the worst offender of them all. This type of tree is infamous for how it spreads juglone, a toxic chemical. It releases juglone from its roots and into the soil, sending the toxic chemical towards nearby trees with the intent of hurting them and increasing nutrients for itself. Any

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tree, or really any plant, that resides near the black walnut tree is at risk of being attacked.

The fascinating world beneath the forest soil is just one of many examples of how Mother Nature persists and thrives without human aid or interference. Trees have been helping and hurting one another long before we ever noticed. Simard's findings are not the first in this field, and they will not be the last. As long as humans share the planet with trees, we will be curious about their nature. So, the next time you stroll past a tree, take a closer look than usual. You may discover yet another intriguing aspect of trees never known to humans before.

### **Skill Check: Falling for Mangos**

The evening had a golden glow about it; the sun was setting in the west and casting deep orange hues across the countryside of Toa Alta, Puerto Rico.

While Jariel played catch with his cousin, Jose, he gazed at the luminous sunset in the background and tried to hold that image and feeling in his memory. It was the final day of his trip to Puerto Rico, and Jariel was saddened at the thought of returning home to New Jersey tomorrow. Two weeks had raced by far too quickly and Jariel was reluctant to say goodbye to this beautiful island.

As the two cousins continued to pass the baseball back and forth outside their Grandpa's home, Jariel reminisced about the fond memories of this trip. Jose had been his animated tour guide and took him to experience it all: sauntering the streets of Old San Juan, swimming at Seven Seas Beach, exploring underground caves, and—

"Ouch!" Jariel said suddenly, his reminiscing cut short. He rubbed the top of his head, bemused. "Something just fell on my head."

Jose hurriedly rushed over to check on his cousin and, as he neared, crouched down to grab something off the ground. "You're standing right under Grandpa's mango tree!" he chuckled and held up the mango that had fallen on Jariel's head.

Jariel joined in on the laughter. He then noticed a few other mangos that had already fallen on the ground. "What do you do with all these mangos?"

"Ah, let me show you!" Jose replied and rubbed his palms together eagerly. He scooped up a handful of mangos, and Jariel followed him curiously back inside Grandpa's house.

Grandpa was sitting in the living room with a black coffee and a book. He glimpsed at the mangos in Jose's arms and asked, "Is it time for flan de mango?"

"It's time!" Jose bellowed excitedly and continued into the kitchen.

Time for what?" Jariel asked and rushed after his cousin.

"We're going to bake flan de mango, a tasty dessert that I love," Jose announced. "And we have the secret ingredient right here—fresh, ripe mangos straight from Grandpa's tree!" Jose proceeded to crowd the kitchen counter with eggs, lemon juice, sugar, milk, and more, knowing just what ingredients to grab.

"I've never baked one before," Jariel admitted. "But how can I help?"

"Not a problem. We'll do it together." And the two worked together for the next hour in the kitchen. Jose read the recipe as Jariel measured the ingredients. Then Jose poured the ingredients as Jariel mixed the sweet-smelling batter. Before long, a delicious flan de mango was being pulled out of the oven.

"Perfect timing. Your mothers just got back from town," Grandpa said, strolling into the kitchen. "Wow, that's the best looking flan de mango I've seen all summer!" He patted both cousins on the back.

Grandpa sat at the table with Jariel's mother and Jose's mother, Aunt Esmeralda. The two cousins trotted over and

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proudly served a slice to everyone. Golden with a melted sugary glaze on top and the juicy taste of nectar inside, the flan de mango quickly disappeared from everyone's plate. Seconds were immediately requested.

"What a perfect way to end this trip," Jariel commented before digging into his second slice.

"I'm glad you had a good time," Jariel's mother smiled widely at her son. She then made eye contact with Aunt Esmeralda and Grandpa who both smiled back. Jariel's mother added slowly, "I guess it's a good thing that the five of us will be seeing each other again soon in New Jersey."

Jariel froze. Jose dropped his fork and it clanged against the ceramic plate.

Jariel's mother started to explain how Grandpa, Aunt Esmeralda, and Jose would be coming to stay with them for the remainder of summer. Within seconds, both boys were out of their chairs, dancing around the house and pretending to hit home runs. Jariel started spouting all the different places in New Jersey that he wanted Jose to experience during his upcoming visit. "There's the boardwalk in Atlantic City! We can also catch the train to Yankee Stadium to watch a baseball game and, if we're lucky, we might even catch a foul ball!"

"Don't forget about your leadership project," Jariel's mother reminded him. "You'll need to make some time for that."

Oh, right. I volunteered to plan our community garden," Jariel recollected. "Maybe you can help me, Jose."

"That sounds fun," Jose chimed. "What will you grow in the garden?"

Jariel paused for a minute, and then with another spoonful of flan de mango and a knowing grin, he said, "A mango tree, of course."

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: An excerpt from "Malala Yousafzai's Speech to the United Nations"

Previously:

This text is made up of several excerpts from Malala Yousafzai's speech to the United Nations.

So here I stand ... so here I stand, one girl among many.

I speak—not for myself, but so those without voice can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights.

Their right to live in peace.

Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. Their right to be educated.

Dear friends, on the ninth of October 2012, the Taliban shot me on the left side of my forehead. They shot my friends too. They thought that the bullets would silence us. But they failed. And out of that silence came thousands of voices. The terrorists thought that they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage were born.

I am the same Malala. My ambitions are the same. My hopes are the same. My dreams are the same.

Dear sisters and brothers, I am not against anyone. Neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I am here to speak up for the right of education of every child. I want education for the sons and the daughters of the Taliban, and all the terrorists and extremists.

...

Dear fellows, today I am focusing on women's rights and girls' education because they are suffering the most. There was a time when women social activists asked men to stand up for their rights.

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But this time we will do it by ourselves. I am not telling men to step away from speaking for women's rights, rather I am focusing on women to be independent to fight for themselves.

So dear sisters and brothers, now it is time to speak up. So today we call upon the world leaders to change their strategic policies in favor of peace and prosperity.

We call upon the world leaders that all the peace deals must protect women's and children's rights. A deal that goes against the rights of women is unacceptable...."

### **Unit 10: Hungry?**

Hungry? Tired of waiting until lunch time? Do you crave fast, delicious food delivered to you in seconds no matter where you are? Are you at school? We deliver! At home? We deliver! Standing in the parking lot? Yay, we deliver there too! People like us deserve to eat when and where we want to! Don't we? Well, my friend, now you can finally have what you've always wanted with new Ten-or-Less food delivery service. Just place your order and count to 10. We'll be there. Try it now! You'll love it!

### **Units 11-14: An excerpt from "Malala Yousafzai's Speech to the United Nations"**

Previously:

This text is made up of several excerpts from Malala Yousafzai's speech to the United Nations.

We call upon all governments to ensure free compulsory education all over the world for every child.

We call upon all the governments to fight against terrorism and violence, to protect children from brutality and harm.

We call upon the developed nations to support the expansion of educational opportunities for girls in the developing world.

We call upon all the communities to be tolerant—to reject prejudice based on cast, creed, sect, color, religion or gender. To ensure freedom and equality for women so that they can flourish. We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.

We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave—to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential.

Dear brothers and sisters, we want schools and education for every child's bright future. We will continue our journey to our destination of peace and education. No one can stop us. We will speak up for our rights and we will bring change through our voice. We believe in the power and the strength of our words. Our words can change the whole world.

Because we are all together, united for the cause of education. And if we want to achieve our goal, then let us empower ourselves with the weapon of knowledge and let us shield ourselves with unity and togetherness.

Dear brothers and sisters, we must not forget that millions of people are suffering from poverty, injustice and ignorance. We must not forget that millions of children are out of their schools. We must not forget that our sisters and brothers are waiting for a bright, peaceful future.

So let us wage a global struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism. Let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons.

One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education First.

Thank you.

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## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: "After Twenty Years"

By O. Henry

The policeman on the beat moved up the avenue impressively. The impressiveness was habitual and not for show, for spectators were few. The time was barely 10 o'clock at night, but chilly gusts of wind with a taste of rain in them had well nigh de-peopled the streets.

Trying doors as he went, twirling his club with many intricate and artful movements, turning now and then to cast his watchful eye down the pacific thoroughfare, the officer, with his stalwart form and slight swagger, made a fine picture of a guardian of the peace. The vicinity was one that kept early hours. Now and then you might see the lights of a cigar store or of an all-night lunch counter; but the majority of the doors belonged to business places that had long since been closed.

When about midway of a certain block the policeman suddenly slowed his walk. In the doorway of a darkened hardware store a man leaned, with an unlighted cigar in his mouth. As the policeman walked up to him, the man spoke up quickly.

"It's all right, officer," he said, reassuringly. "I'm just waiting for a friend. It's an appointment made twenty years ago. Sounds a little funny to you, doesn't it? Well, I'll explain if you'd like to make certain it's all straight. About that long ago there used to be a restaurant where this store stands— 'Big Joe' Brady's restaurant."

"Until five years ago," said the policeman. "It was torn down then."

The man in the doorway struck a match and lit his cigar. The light showed a pale, square-jawed face with keen eyes, and a little white scar near his right eyebrow. His scarfpin was a large diamond, oddly set.

"Twenty years ago to-night," said the man, "I dined here at 'Big Joe' Brady's with Jimmy Wells, my best chum, and the finest chap in the world. He and I were raised here in New York, just like two brothers, together. I was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. The next morning I was to start for the West to make my fortune. You couldn't have dragged Jimmy out of New York; he thought it was the only place on earth. Well, we agreed that night that we would meet here again exactly twenty years from that date and time, no matter what our conditions might be or from what distance we might have to come. We figured that in twenty years each of us ought to have our destiny worked out and our fortunes made, whatever they were going to be."

"It sounds pretty interesting," said the policeman. "Rather a long time between meets, though, it seems to me. Haven't you heard from your friend since you left?"

"Well, yes, for a time we corresponded," said the other. "But after a year or two we lost track of each other. You see, the West is a pretty big proposition, and I kept hustling around over it pretty lively. But I know Jimmy will meet me here if he's alive, for he always was the truest, stanchest old chap in the world. He'll never forget. I came a thousand miles to stand in this door to-night, and it's worth it if my old partner turns up."

The waiting man pulled out a handsome watch, the lids of it set with small diamonds.

"Three minutes to ten," he announced. "It was exactly ten o'clock when we parted here at the restaurant door."

### Unit 9: The Proud Horse

The proud horse was ready for the parade. Today he'd help carry the Olympic torch, a symbol of the games. I'm the most handsome horse there ever was, he thought arrogantly. He was indeed beautiful. His shiny black coat sparkled in the sunshine and his long mane rested elegantly along his neck. They set out and immediately people

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clapped and cheered. He was convinced this was for him. See, they all admire me he bragged loudly. He began prancing in a circle to show off his beauty to the onlookers. His owner quickly guessed the horse's thoughts and tugged sternly on the reins.

"Move along silly horse," he scolded. "That cheering isn't for you. It's for the Olympic torch you're carrying!"

### **Units 11-14: "After Twenty Years"**

*By O. Henry*

"Did pretty well out West, didn't you?" asked the policeman.

"You bet! I hope Jimmy has done half as well. He was a kind of plodder, though, good fellow as he was. I've had to compete with some of the sharpest wits going to get my pile. A man gets in a groove in New York. It takes the West to put a razor-edge on him."

The policeman twirled his club and took a step or two.

"I'll be on my way. Hope your friend comes around all right. Going to call time on him sharp?"

"I should say not!" said the other. "I'll give him half an hour at least. If Jimmy is alive on earth he'll be here by that time. So long, officer."

"Good-night, sir," said the policeman, passing on along his beat, trying doors as he went.

There was now a fine, cold drizzle falling, and the wind had risen from its uncertain puffs into a steady blow. The few foot passengers astir in that quarter hurried dismally and silently along with coat collars turned high and pocketed hands. And in the door of the hardware store the man who had come a thousand miles to fill an appointment, uncertain almost to absurdity, with the friend of his youth, smoked his cigar and waited.

About twenty minutes he waited, and then a tall man in a long overcoat, with collar turned up to his ears, hurried across from the opposite side of the street. He went directly to the waiting man.

"Is that you, Bob?" he asked, doubtfully.

"Is that you, Jimmy Wells?" cried the man in the door.

"Bless my heart!" exclaimed the new arrival, grasping both the other's hands with his own. "It's Bob, sure as fate. I was certain I'd find you here if you were still in existence. Well, well, well!—twenty years is a long time. The old restaurant's gone, Bob; I wish it had lasted, so we could have had another dinner there. How has the West treated you, old man?"

"Bully; it has given me everything I asked it for. You've changed lots, Jimmy. I never thought you were so tall by two or three inches."

"Oh, I grew a bit after I was twenty." "Doing well in New York, Jimmy?"

"Moderately. I have a position in one of the city departments. Come on, Bob; we'll go around to a place I know of, and have a good long talk about old times."

The two men started up the street, arm in arm. The man from the West, his egotism enlarged by success, was beginning to outline the history of his career. The other, submerged in his overcoat, listened with interest.

At the corner stood a drug store, brilliant with electric lights. When they came into this glare each of them turned simultaneously to gaze upon the other's face. The man from the West stopped suddenly and released his arm.

"You're not Jimmy Wells," he snapped. "Twenty years is a long time, but not long enough to change a man's nose from a Roman to a pug."

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"It sometimes changes a good man into a bad one," said the tall man. "You've been under arrest for ten minutes, 'Silky' Bob. Chicago thinks you may have dropped over our way and wires us she wants to have a chat with you. Going quietly, are you? That's sensible. Now, before we go on to the station here's a note I was asked to hand you. You may read it here at the window. It's from Patrolman Wells."

The man from the West unfolded the little piece of paper handed him. His hand was steady when he began to read, but it trembled a little by the time he had finished. The note was rather short.

"Bob: I was at the appointed place on time. When you struck the match to light your cigar I saw it was the face of the man wanted in Chicago. Somehow I couldn't do it myself, so I went around and got a plain clothes man to do the job. —Jimmy"

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 3-6: "The Dinner Party"

*By Mona Gardner*

The country is India. A colonial official and his wife are giving a large dinner party. They are seated with their guests—army officers and government attachés and their wives, and a visiting American naturalist—in their spacious dining room, which has a bare marble floor, open rafters, and wide glass doors opening onto a veranda.

A spirited discussion springs up between a young girl who insists that women have outgrown the jumping-on-a-chair-at-the-sight-of-a-mouse era and a colonel who says that they haven't.

"A woman's unfailing reaction in any crisis," the colonel says, "is to scream. And while a man may feel like it, he has that ounce more of nerve control than a woman has. And that last ounce is what counts."

The American does not join in the argument but watches the other guests. As he looks, he sees a strange expression come over the face of the hostess. She is staring straight ahead, her muscles contracting slightly. With a slight gesture she summons the native boy standing behind her chair and whispers to him. The boy's eyes widen, and he quickly leaves the room. Of the guests, none except the American notices this or sees the boy place a bowl of milk on the veranda just outside the open doors.

The American comes to with a start. In India, milk in a bowl means only one thing—bait for a snake. He realizes there must be a cobra in the room. He looks up at the rafters—the likeliest place— but they are bare. Three corners of the room are empty, and in the fourth the servants are waiting to serve the next course. There is only one place left—under the table.

His first impulse is to jump back and warn the others, but he knows the commotion would frighten the cobra into striking. He speaks quickly, the tone of his voice so arresting that it soberes everyone.

"I want to know just what control everyone at this table has. I will count to three hundred—that's five minutes—and not one of you is to move a muscle. Those who move will forfeit fifty rupees. Ready!"

The twenty people sit like stone images while he counts. He is saying "...two hundred and eighty..." when, out of the corner of his eye, he sees the cobra emerge and make for the bowl of milk. Screams ring out as he jumps to slam the veranda doors safely shut.

"You were right, Colonel!" the host exclaims. "A man has just shown us an example of perfect control."

"Just a minute," the American says, turning to his hostess. "Mrs. Wynnes, how did you know that cobra was in the room?"

A faint smile lights up the woman's face as she replies: "Because it was crawling across my foot."

**Unit 9: The Bear and the Bees**

A bear was roaming through the forest when his nose caught a whiff of his favorite treat—honey. His nose led him to a beehive in a tree. Just then, three bees returned home and stung him on the nose to keep him from the honey. The bear lost his temper. He began to claw at the tree to destroy the beehive. His actions brought the whole swarm of bees out of the hive. The bear began to run hard and fast to save himself. He came to a river with a log floating down it. The bear took a gigantic leap and landed right on the log. He had successfully escaped from the bees. Sadly, the log sank and the bear washed away.

**Unit 9: Maggie & Buddy**

Maggie loved her dog, Buddy, but he was always in trouble! Once, he chased the neighbor's chickens into the street. Another time, he stole Maggie's lunch right off her plate! One day, Maggie was horrified to find Buddy had shredded the couch cushions!

"That's it, Buddy," Maggie said sternly as she cleaned up the room. "You're going to obedience school."

When class ended three weeks later, Buddy wagged his tail with pride as the instructor gave Maggie his certificate. Maggie planned to give Buddy his favorite snack as a reward for his good behavior. When they got home, Maggie sighed as she noticed that the chewed paper on the seat next to Buddy was his obedience certificate!

**Units 11-14: "The Last Leaf"**

*By O. Henry*

There was a time when poor artists lived in the old buildings of Greenwich Village, New York. Sue and Johnsy lived at the top of one of those buildings. Both women were artists and had decided to live and work together.

One chilly autumn, Johnsy became ill. She lay on her bed without moving, very thin and very quiet. All day, she looked through the window at the wall of the building next to hers.

"She has a very small chance," the doctor told Sue. "But only if she wants to live. If people don't want to live, I can't do much for them. It seems that Johnsy has decided that she is not going to get well."

After the doctor had gone, Sue walked into Johnsy's room. She was looking out the window and counting back. "Twelve," she said. And a little later, "Eleven." And then, "Ten, nine, eight," almost together. And then, "Seven."

Sue looked out the window. What was there to count? An old, old tree grew against the wall of the next house. Almost all its leaves had fallen from its dark branches.

"Six," said Johnsy, in a low voice. "They're falling faster now. Three days ago there were almost a hundred. Now, there are only five."

"Five what?" said Sue.

"Leaves. On the tree. When the last one falls, I must go, too," sighed Johnsy wearily.

"Try to sleep," said Sue as she pulled down the window shade. "I need to ask Mr. Behrman to come up to help me with a painting. Don't try to move till I come back."

Old Behrman was a painter who lived on the first floor. He had had no success as a painter. He had always talked of painting a great picture, a masterpiece, but he had never yet started it. Sue found him in his dark room. She told him about Johnsy and the leaves on the tree. Together they looked out the window at the tree, and then they looked at each other for a moment without speaking.

"Poor Johnsy!" he cried. "This is not any place for someone so good as Johnsy to lie sick. One day I shall paint my

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masterpiece, and we shall all go away from here.”

That night, a cold, wet storm blew through the city. In the morning, Johnsy begged Sue to help her look out the window.

Even after the beating rain and wind, there still was one leaf to be seen against the wall. It was the last leaf on the tree. It was dark green near the branch. At the edges, it was turning yellow with age.

The day slowly passed. As it grew dark, Johnsy could still see the leaf hanging from its branch against the wall. That night, the wind began again to blow.

When it was light, Johnsy again commanded that she be allowed to see from the window. The leaf was still there. “Sue,” said Johnsy. “Something has made that last leaf stay there to show me I was wrong to want to die. I’ll try to eat now. I want to get well.”

The doctor came in the afternoon.

“She’s safe,” he told Sue. “She has found the will to live. But not all are so fortunate. Mr. Behrman downstairs has just died. They found him the other morning as cold as ice with his shoes and his clothes wet. He was near a ladder with his materials for painting. There was paint, green paint and yellow paint....”

“Oh, my,” said Sue. “That must be why the last leaf on the wall never moved when the wind was blowing. It is Old Behrman’s great masterpiece—he painted it there the night that the last leaf fell.”

## LEVEL 13 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: From Feet to Wheels to the Future

The earliest form of land travel for most humans was walking. Travel was slow and difficult. However, there was not much need to travel, so humans tended to stay in one place.

An invention that was important to the progress of land travel was the wheel. It was invented more than 5,000 years ago. The wheel led to the development of vehicles such as carts and wagons. Initially, carts and wagons were clumsy and noisy and did not make land travel any faster or easier. They did, however, make it possible for humans to carry goods as well as themselves from one place to another. Vehicles with wheels created a way to transport.

A major form of land travel for thousands and thousands of years was a wheeled vehicle that was pulled by a horse or some other animal. Continued improvements made these vehicles somewhat faster and fairly comfortable. But about 100 years ago, the dominance of these vehicles began to dwindle with the mass production of cars.

Early models of cars were like early forms of animal-pulled vehicles. They were not much better than the prevailing forms of travel. But today, because of continued improvements, cars are faster, more comfortable, and safer than ever. They are the main form of travel for many people.

Improvements to cars have never stopped. The latest improvements are heading toward a future with self-driving cars. The question is: Are cars that drive themselves a good idea?

Human error is responsible for 93 to 95 percent of the 32,000 fatal car accidents that occur each year on U.S. roads. Proponents of self-driving cars think they will remove human error. The cars will do the driving and allow the human driver to do other things safely. Therefore, the number of fatalities will be reduced. Additionally, proponents argue that these cars will provide greater independence for elderly people and people with disabilities.

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Self-driving cars will be totally controlled by computers. But, opponents warn that computers can have glitches. Glitches could have the same effect as human error. Will the number of injuries and fatalities be reduced? Opponents are also concerned about legal issues. Will the human in a self-driving car, who is not even driving, be held legally responsible for an accident?

Proponents know that self-driving cars will not prevent all accidents. However, these cars offer benefits that are not currently available. Opponents know that some new technologies are helpful to drivers. On the other hand, there are too many unanswered questions when the human driver is totally replaced by a computer. Only the future will tell how self-driving cars fit into the ever-developing history of land travel.

### **Units 9: Two of a Kind**

There are African elephants and Asian elephants. In many ways, these elephants are the same. Let's compare them. Both elephants are related to the woolly mammoth. African elephants have trunks just like Asian elephants. The elephants are also similar in color. In addition, they are both plant-eating animals and live in herds, or groups.

Now, let's contrast them. What are some ways that these two elephants are different? Although African and Asian elephants have large ears, the African elephant's ears are larger. Female African elephants have tusks. However, female Asian elephants don't. African elephants have a dip in their backs, but Asian elephants have an arch instead.

### **Units 11-14: What is the Cost of Freedom?**

A motorcycle means one thing: FREEDOM! On a motorcycle, you're in control. You're on your own. You own the road. For that matter, you can create your own road. For example, you can scoot between and around idling cars and continue your forward movement. And, of course, there are plenty of thrills riding on a shiny motorcycle with speeds that can reach more than 160 miles per hour.

However, there are risks. You are nine times more likely to become seriously injured in a crash on a motorcycle than in a car. Think about a motorcycle versus a car. There is a lot less protection on a motorcycle, right? Now, add in factors such as rainy weather and gravel or other unexpected road obstacles that make driving dangerous for all drivers, but more so for motorcyclists. You can see why there are many more injuries on motorcycles. There are also more fatalities.

Requiring anti-lock brakes on motorcycles is often mentioned as a way to reduce fatalities and serious injuries. Anti-lock brakes prevent the wheels on a motorcycle from locking up. Locked-up wheels may cause a motorcycle to fall over. Studies show that anti-lock brakes can lower the rate of fatal crashes by 31 percent.

On the other hand, people point out a downside of anti-lock brakes on motorcycles. The cost of an anti-lock brake system is high. Out of need, many motorcyclists use their bikes as low-cost transportation. They cannot afford anti-lock brakes.

A more controversial way of reducing serious injuries is requiring motorcyclists, by law, to wear helmets. Some countries such as Spain and New Zealand have universal laws. All motorcyclists must wear helmets. Other countries such as the United Kingdom, Russia, and India have no universal laws. Several countries have laws that vary. For example, 19 out of the 50 U.S. states have passed universal helmet laws. In most other U.S. states, there are laws that require some, but not all, motorcyclists to wear helmets. Only three states have no motorcycle helmet laws.

Motorcycle helmets can prevent serious, and potentially life-changing, brain injuries. Without a helmet, a motorcyclist is three times more likely to suffer brain injuries in a crash. Helmets have been shown to reduce

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fatalities by 37 percent. The value of motorcycle helmets in reducing serious injuries and fatalities has been recognized for more than 60 years, but not everyone agrees.

Some people believe that helmets make it more difficult for motorcyclists to see and hear. Other people suggest that although helmets may prevent brain injuries, they will not prevent neck or back injuries. Notably, not wearing a helmet for many people is a matter of personal freedom, which is the ability to think and act for oneself.

A universal law requiring anti-lock brakes on all motorcycles and helmets for all motorcyclists could greatly reduce serious injuries and fatalities. But, for some people, such a law would come at the cost of personal freedom. Not requiring anti-lock brakes and helmets would preserve personal freedom. But, this could come at the cost of a normal life or life itself. So, what is the cost of FREEDOM?

## LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: No Limits to Screen Time

To the Student:

Televisions, computers, and smartphones are devices with screens. People spend a lot of time focused on their screens. Write an argument in response to this question: Should families limit the screen time for people your age?

In your argument, be sure to:

- State your claim in your opening paragraph.
- Do research to find evidence to support your claim.
- Give your reasons and evidence in a logical order.
- Write a conclusion.

I remember a children's story about a bear who finds a whole field of strawberries. He loves eating them and can't stop. He learns that too many strawberries can make a bear sick. That lesson is true of many other things in life. Like the bear in that story, children should learn how much is too much. And the best way to learn is from experience, not from outside rules. I believe that families should not limit the screen time of young people my age.

First of all, limiting screen time is not practical. How would the rules work? For example, suppose that I'm allowed to be on the Internet for an hour each evening. What if it takes more than an hour to find the information for a homework assignment? Then the homework can't be finished. Or suppose that I can only watch TV for an hour at a particular time of day. What if I want to do something else during that time and watch a show at a different time? Maybe a parent can control a young child's viewing times, but it's not practical to monitor everything an older kid or teen does.

Another reason not to limit screen time is that digital technology is basic to life today. We depend on our devices for information and for connecting with friends. We use these devices to create art and music. We read books on them. And we use them for relaxation and entertainment. There has been a lot of research about whether playing video games is bad for your health, but there is no proof that the effects are harmful. In fact, a 2010 study analyzed video game playing habits of 3,000 children. The study showed that kids who play a lot of video games have good social relationships and do well in school. "Video games are now a part of normal childhood," said one of the researchers.

Most important, allowing young people to manage their time teaches independence. People my age (in middle school) are always being told that growing up means becoming more responsible and independent. In his humorous book, *Surviving Middle School*, teacher Luke Reynolds wants middle-schoolers to take initiative. He explains, "All it really means is that you do something rather than waiting for someone to tell you what to do all the time." When we take initiative, we are responsible for our own behavior. That includes figuring out how to

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manage our time. And that, in turn, includes making our own choices about screen time.

Like the bear in the children's story, young people will find out for themselves how much screen time is too much. We might have to learn from mistakes. But we should be free to learn for ourselves, and not from rules that are impractical and outdated.

### Unit 9: Good for You

Music is good for the human brain. Playing and listening to music has many benefits. Research shows that learning to play a musical instrument increases fine motor skills and attention. Listening to upbeat music produces positive feelings. Additionally, Doctor Otto Hilton says, "Listening to music enhances memory even in older patients with memory loss." Furthermore, a recent study showed that listening to classical music for just 15 minutes improved student performance on IQ tests. Both playing and listening to music have many positive effects on the mind.

### Unit 10: Dogs Are Great!

Dogs make great companions. People who have pet dogs live happier and healthier lives. Many studies in recent years show that pet ownership directly impacts the owner's happiness. A recent university study showed that just five minutes of petting a dog releases the hormones in the brain responsible for happiness. "Owning a dog also increases interaction with other people, which can lead to an improved sense of wellbeing," says Doctor Angela Cooper. The positive impact of pet ownership on health has been scientifically proven. In 1999, Swedish researchers found that young children who lived with a pet dog had fewer allergies. Additionally, walking a pet dog has been shown to contribute to lower blood pressure, which reduces the chances of a heart attack. Not only do dogs make excellent pets, they help their owners feel great and live longer.

### Units 11-14: Yes to a Later Start Time

To the Student:

When should the school day start and end for teenagers? That has been a topic of debate in many communities, including our own. In our middle schools and high school, the day begins at 7:30 a.m. Write an argument in response to this question: Should the school day start later for students in our middle schools and high school?

In your argument, be sure to:

- State your claim in your opening paragraph.
- Do research to find evidence to support your claim.
- Give your reasons and evidence in a logical order.
- Write a conclusion.

A student named Isabella is waiting on a street corner for the school bus to take her to middle school. It's 6:45 on a winter morning, and it's still dark. She struggled out of bed at 6:15, washed her face, got dressed, and barely had time to grab a slice of toast and her backpack before heading out the door. She falls asleep on the bus, and when school begins 45 minutes later, she can't stop yawning. Isabella has a problem. So do other students in our middle schools and high school. The problem is that our school day starts too early and should start later.

A main reason to start later is that an early start time is especially hard on teenagers. Scientific studies show that sleep patterns change as children grow into teens. According to researcher Kyla L. Wahlstrom, teenagers don't naturally fall asleep until around 10:45 p.m., and they require around 9.25 hours of sleep each night. That means teenagers' brains "remain in sleep mode until about 8 a.m." When an alarm buzzes at 6:15, a teen wakes up but needs more sleep. At school, the student is still too sleepy to learn.

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In addition, a later start can prevent the harmful effects of “sleep deprivation,” the medical term for not enough sleep. Doctors say that sleep deprivation leads to health problems in teens. These include changes in mood and behavior, increased risk of obesity, and high blood pressure. Sleep deprivation even causes car accidents because teen drivers haven’t had enough sleep to react alertly.

Finally, there is proof that later start times bring good results. A study of more than 200 students in one school showed that changing the start time from 8:00 to 8:30 made a difference. More students were able to get at least 8 hours of sleep a night, and fewer students reported being too tired to focus on schoolwork or join in sports. In a study of U.S. high schools, changing to a start time after 8:30 a.m. brought benefits. The students showed better attendance and earned higher grades in the first class of the day. And fewer students fell asleep in class.

Middle school and high school students should not have to struggle with a 7:30 start time. If the school day begins at 8:30 or later, students like Isabella will arrive at school ready to learn, instead of wishing they were back in bed.

## LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: “Oranges”

By Gary Soto

The first time I walked / With a girl, I was twelve, / Cold, and weighted down With two oranges in my jacket. / December. Frost cracking Beneath my steps, my breath Before me, then gone, / As I walked toward / Her house, the one whose Porch light burned yellow / Night and day, in any weather. A dog barked at me, until / She came out pulling / At her gloves, face bright / With rouge. I smiled, / Touched her shoulder, and led Her down the street, across / A used car lot and a line / Of newly planted trees, / Until we were breathing / Before a drugstore. We Entered, the tiny bell Bringing a saleslady / Down a narrow aisle of goods. / I turned to the candies Tiered like bleachers, / And asked what she wanted - Light in her eyes, a smile Starting at the corners / Of her mouth. I fingered / A nickel in my pocket, / And when she lifted a chocolate That cost a dime, / I didn’t say anything. / I took the nickel from / My pocket, then an orange, And set them quietly on / The counter. When I looked up, The lady’s eyes met mine, / And held them, knowing Very well what it was all About. / Outside, / A few cars hissing past, / Fog hanging like old / Coats between the trees. I took my girl’s hand / In mine for two blocks, Then released it to let / Her unwrap the chocolate. I peeled my orange / That was so bright against the gray of December That, from some distance, / Someone might have thought / I was making a fire in my hands.

### Unit 9: The House on the Corner

It was a dark and stormy night. The house on the corner, rundown and condemned by the city, seemed especially creepy. No one had lived there in years. But rumor had it the house wasn’t actually empty. *Something* was in there. Curiosity had finally gotten the best of Aaron and his friends. Tonight, they would figure out what lurked inside that house. As they left their bikes on the lawn, they heard the wind pick up. They’d have to hurry before it began pouring.

“There it is,” Max yelled. “I saw something move by the window on the second floor!”

Slowly, they opened the front door. All three boys winced as the hinges creaked. The noise must have startled *whatever* it was. They heard a whoosh and a thump. Then another thump.

“Forget it. Let’s just turn back,” Max said in a small, trembling voice.

Aaron was rattled too, but he didn’t let it show. “No, we’re already here. Don’t be a chicken,” he snapped.

“Yeah, he’s right,” Trevor agreed. “Let’s find out.”

They made their way cautiously up the stairs. Another thump came from the room at the end of the hall. They

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looked at each other wondering who would run back down the stairs first. No one made a move. Aaron took a step toward the door. "On the count of three," he whispered. "One, two, three!" He yanked the door open.

All at once they laughed with a mixture of relief and amusement. The creature wasn't terrifying at all. It was an old jacket hanging on a hook by the open window. The gusting wind was just strong enough to make the jacket flap against the sill.

"But...who does the jacket belong to?" Max wondered aloud just as the boys heard the sound of footsteps on the creaking stairs below.

### **Units 11-14: "'Hope' is the thing with feathers"**

*By Emily Dickinson*

"Hope" is the thing with feathers - / That perches in the soul - / And sings the tune without the words - / And never stops - at all - / And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard - / And sore must be the storm - / That could abash the little Bird / That kept so many warm - / I've heard it in the chilliest land - / And on the strangest Sea - / Yet - never - in Extremity, / It asked a crumb - of me.

## **LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 3**

### **Units 3-6: In the Key of Nira Ghani, Part 1**

*An excerpt from the book "In the Key of Nira Ghani" written by Natasha Deen.*

In the book *In the Key of Nira Ghani*, Nira wants to audition for jazz band, but her parents rarely allow her to do after-school activities. She also has an old, second-hand trumpet that she thinks isn't good enough for the audition. Nira decides that, before she can persuade her parents to allow her to try out for band, she needs to convince them to let her get a job to pay for a better trumpet. The initial conversation about Nira getting a job failed miserably! In this excerpt, Nira cautiously restarts the conversation with her parents and grandmother while drinking a customary cup of tea. She decides to focus the conversation on getting a job and leaves out any mention of the band audition until her parents are in a better mood.

I live in a world where the TV and movies show me happy families and parents who talk to their kids and try to understand their point of view. Canada is like this multicolored tapestry, where a parent's life and a kid's come together to make this amazing image.

But my life's not like that. My address may be in Canada, but I live in little Guyana, a benevolent dictatorship where I'm not a full citizen. The number-one rule here is to obey your elders. The number-two rule is to check your individuality at the door. This is a community, one organism with a bunch of parts, and we rise and fall together.

Mom and Dad have never defied their parents. It would never occur to them that me having my own opinion isn't rebellion. They grew up poor. They look at my wanting stuff like I'm spitting in the face of their sacrifice, and nothing I do seems to change their minds.

"This job," my mother starts the conversation as Grandma drops the tea bags into the pot. "Where are you going to work?"

"I don't know yet." Dad snorts.

"I don't know yet because I didn't want to get too far into researching places without having your permission."

He huffs, but his shoulders drop a few inches.

"And you want this job because you want to buy a trumpet?" asks my mom. "It's that important to you?"

I nod.

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"We can get it for you," she says. "I don't like the idea of you working when you should be studying."

"It's too expensive for you to buy it for me." I smile at Grandma as she puts the teapot on the table and pours out a cup for each of us. "I don't understand why you're making a big deal about this. Keeping me focused on school isn't preparing me for living on my own as an adult."

Dad smirks. "But letting you gallivant around and buy clothes—"

"Letting me learn how to schedule my life when there's more than one thing is what's important," I say. "What happens when I'm married with kids and a job? If I don't learn how to juggle multiple things now, you think I'm miraculously going to learn it overnight?"

That makes Mom pause. She reaches for the mug Grandma sets before her.

Grandma puts my cup in front of me, and I catch the small smile at the edge of her mouth. She squeezes my shoulder.

I take a sip. There are only two teaspoons of sugar in the drink. That's a good sign. It means she doesn't think this discussion will cause the end of the world.

"But why do you need a new one? The old one is fine," says Dad.

"That's what I told you when you wanted a new bike," Grandma tells him.

His face screws up. He takes the mug from her hands. "It's not the same thing. That bike was for work. I was a messenger, and the chain on the old one broke all the time. She's not doing anything with the trumpet." He takes a sip, grimaces, and ladles another spoon of sugar into his cup.

Grandma nods at his words, and Dad shoots me a look of victory.

"You're right," says Grandma. "She needs to do something with the trumpet. Nira, didn't you say the school was holding jazz band auditions?"

The table freezes into a stop-motion tableau. Our faces are caught in the moment—Mom, shock. Dad looks like the betrayal will become a generational grudge. I'm sure my expression mirrors a mongoose in the crosshairs of a snake.

Natasha Deen is a Caribbean South Asian woman who immigrated to Canada from Guyana when she was five years old. Growing up, she wanted to be a superhero, but settled on being a writer and changing the world one story at a time.

## Unit 9: Noah's Difficult Choice

It was snowing heavily and Noah could barely see the road in front of him. He slowed his speed and tightened his grip on the steering wheel. Suddenly, the car in front of him began to swerve. Noah let out a gasp as he watched the car veer off the road. He heard the loud crash when it slammed into a tree. Noah pulled over cautiously. The driver of the other car probably needed help. But it was dark and the storm was getting worse. On top of that, Noah had just gotten his license and had never driven in snow before. He worried that if he stopped now he might not make it home. He searched frantically for his phone but could not locate it. He thought about his choices. Should I get out and see if I can help? Do I wait for someone else to stop?

## Units 11–14: In the Key of Nira Ghani, Part 2

An excerpt from the book *"In the Key of Nira Ghani"* written by Natasha Deen.

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In the first excerpt of *In the Key of Nira Ghani*, Nira asks her parents if she can get a job to buy a new trumpet. Her parents are strongly against Nira getting a job because they want her to focus exclusively on schoolwork. At the end of Excerpt one, Grandma shocks the family when she asks Nira to get the jazz band audition flyer; Nira had no intention of telling her parents about the audition yet! She planned to get their approval for a job before asking to audition for the school band, but Grandma thwarted that plan. In this excerpt, the discussion continues as Grandma helps Nira navigate the negotiation for what she eventually wants: permission to audition for the band.

"Nira," Grandma says, "fetch the flyer."

I don't know what to do. I'm locked in a combination of delight that she's doing this and terror of being grounded until I die.

"Fetch!" Grandma barks, and I jump from my seat and scurry to my room.

When I return, they're still staring at each other. The only thing moving is the rising steam from the cups. I hold out the flyer.

No one takes it. I let it fall to the table.

"Now a job and band?" Dad asks. He drains his cup and refills it.

"Is that so bad?" Grandma pushes the sugar bowl his way. "You did it as a child."

"It was different then," he says.

"How?" She speaks softly, but there's a challenge in her voice.

It's the same challenge I hear in my parents—the one only a mom or dad can use on their kid.

"Because—"

"Yes, of course." Grandma nods as though she's answered the question herself. "School here is different than back home. Harder—"

Dad makes a sound of exquisite contempt. "Here? Give me a break. Canadian kids have it so easy. They don't even know how to add sums in their head!" His chest puffs out. "Guyana's education is top-notch. What I was learning at Nira's age, the kids here learn in university!"

"If it's not the school work, then it must be Nira," says Grandma. "She's not smart like Farah—"

"She's smarter than Farah!"

Mom and I watch, dumbfounded. Grandma's a Guyanese Geppetto, and she's pulling Dad's strings like a master puppeteer.

"Then she can't be trusted with the responsibility," Grandma says it with a note of finality, and the curtain goes down on my hope.

"Exactly," says Dad.

"I've talked to you, over and over, about how you raise the picknie."

My ears perk at the word. Picknie, it's an affectionate term for a child. Grandma hasn't deserted me, yet.

"You train a child in the way they go. If she's not responsible, that's your fault."

Anger flashes in Dad's eyes. "She's plenty responsible. I know how to raise my picknie!"

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"Good." Grandma smiles and takes a slow sip of her tea. "Then she'll get the job and apply for band."

Dad goes slack in stunned silence. Mom's eyes dart between her husband and her mother-in-law.

I choke back my laughter, but I'm too ecstatic to contain myself, and the sound comes out as a squeak.

Grandma, the puppet master, rises, and I'm quick to follow. No need to sit here and risk Dad rallying the second round.

"Safiya." She sashays out of the kitchen. "I liked the chicken. It tasted much better than the one Gul and Raj cooked on that monstrosity of a BBQ."

My mother perks up. I want to kneel before my grandmother and beg her to teach me everything she knows about negotiating and manipulating. I hazard a peek at my parents as I leave the kitchen. Mom's drinking her tea, a soft smile on her lips. Dad's staring into the mouth of his cup, muttering to himself. No doubt trying to figure out how an octogenarian just bested him. I steal into my room, my steps made easy and light by the victory at my feet.

Natasha Deen is a Caribbean South Asian who immigrated to Canada from Guyana when she was five years old. Growing up, she wanted to be a superhero, but settled on being a writer and changing the world one story at a time.

## LEVEL 14 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: *The Outsiders*

*An excerpt from the book by S.E. Hinton*

S.E. Hinton wrote the book *The Outsiders* based on her experiences growing up. It is narrated by Ponyboy, a 14-year-old who lives in a small city in Oklahoma in the 1960s. Ponyboy is a member of the Greasers. The Greasers are constantly battling with the Socs (pronounced "soashes", short for "socials"), a rival group that comes from a wealthier part of town. Despite the conflict between the groups, Ponyboy is getting to know some of the Socs. In this excerpt, Ponyboy and his Greaser friend, Two-Bit, are walking with their new Soc friends, Cherry and Marcia. Cherry and Ponyboy mention how the Socs and Greasers are different but discover the ways they might be similar.

It seemed funny to me that Socs—if these girls were any example—were just like us. They liked [the music group] the Beatles and thought Elvis Presley was out, and we thought the Beatles were rank and that Elvis was tuff, but that seemed the only difference to me. Of course greasy girls would have acted a lot tougher, but there was a basic sameness. I thought maybe it was money that separated us.

"No", Cherry said slowly when I said this. "It's not just money. Part of it is, but not all. You greasers have a different set of values. You're more emotional. We're sophisticated—cool to the point of not feeling anything. Nothing is real with us. You know, sometimes I'll catch myself talking to a girl-friend, and realize I don't mean half of what I'm saying. I don't really think a party on the river bottom is super-cool, but I'll rave about one to a girl-friend just to be saying something." She smiled at me. "I never told anyone that. I think you're the first person I've ever really gotten through to."

She was coming through to me all right, probably because I was a greaser, and younger; she didn't have to keep her guard up with me.

"Rat race is a perfect name for it", she said. "We're always going and going and going, and never asking where. Did you ever hear of having more than you wanted? So that you couldn't want anything else and then started looking for something else to want? It seems like we're always searching for something to satisfy us, and never finding it. Maybe if we could lose our cool we could."

That was the truth. Socs were always behind a wall of aloofness, careful not to let their real selves show through.

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"That's why we're separated," I said. "It's not money, it's feeling you don't feel anything and we feel too violently."

Two-Bit and Marcia weren't even listening to us. They were engaged in some wild conversation that made no sense to anyone but themselves.

I have quite a rep for being quiet, almost as quiet as [another Greaser,] Johnny. Two-Bit always said he wondered why Johnny and I were such good buddies. "You must make such interestin' conversation," he'd say, cocking one eyebrow, "you keepin' your mouth shut and Johnny not sayin' anything." But Johnny and I understood each other without saying anything. Nobody but my brother could really get me talking. Till I met Cherry Valance.

### **Unit 8: The Ant and the Dove**

An ant fell into a stream and struggled to reach the shore. A dove saw the ant in danger. The dove dropped a leaf in the stream. The ant climbed on the leaf and floated to shore. She felt grateful for the dove's kindness. Later, a hunter was getting ready to shoot the dove. The ant saw the dove in danger. The ant bit the hunter on the heel. He cried out in pain, and the dove flew to safety. She felt grateful for the ant's kindness.

### **Unit 9: The Farmer and His Sons**

Just before a farmer died, he told his sons that there was treasure hidden on their land. He didn't know the exact spot, but it was there. If they worked hard, they would find the treasure. As soon as the farmer died, the sons began to dig up their land. The sons worked hard in the hot sun of summer and into the chilling rains of fall. When they had dug up all the land and the winter snow began to fall, they hadn't found the treasure.

When winter ended, the sons looked over the land that they had worked hard on. They saw new plants growing everywhere. In the fall, they harvested more crops than they had ever harvested before. They sold them and became very rich. The sons finally understood that because they worked hard, they had found the treasure—the crops.

### **Units 11-14: Weird Rules to Follow**

Mia and Lara have been close friends since they were six years old. Mia goes to Lara's house often after school, but Lara doesn't typically go to Mia's house. As Mia gets older, she starts noticing the differences between their homes and their family's lifestyles. Despite the differences, Mia wants to maintain a friendship with Lara. In this excerpt, Mia hosts Lara and cooks her a meal.

I know there will be no one home at my place this afternoon, which is why I decide to ask Lara if she'd like to come over for lunch. This is unusual, as we rarely hang out together at my house.

My friend eagerly accepts the invitation, and we make our way toward my place. When we go inside, I don't bother looking around to see if it's tidy. And I don't look to see Lara's reaction either. If she thinks my house is strange compared to her place, where the furniture all matches and there are actual doorknobs on the doors, she doesn't mention it.

For lunch I decide to make us fish and chips. I often watch my older cousin Al fry dollar chips. I guess I must have been paying close attention because even though I have never made them before, I know exactly what to do. I grab a couple of russet potatoes, wash them and start slicing them into dollar chips. I place the cast-iron pan on the stove and heat the oil. I cautiously place the potato pieces into the pan, let them fry and then carefully turn them over, just like I've seen Al do. Once they're the perfect golden color, I remove them from the pan.

All the while, Lara stands there with a look of wonder. I don't know if it's because of my newfound cooking skills or seeing my home for the first time. Lara tends to do this thing where she averts her eyes from me if something's awkward or embarrassing so I don't feel uncomfortable. I think she's doing it now in not looking around our messy kitchen.

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I know our house is different. Our cupboard doors no longer close properly after Al painted them yellow. But now isn't the time to worry about that. When the dollar chips are done, I set them aside and go to open a quart jar of salmon. I spoon some out onto our plates and then add the potatoes.

"Fish and chips," I proudly exclaim.

We eat our lunch at the kitchen table. We lightly salt our chips and add some ketchup on the side. We barely speak, but that isn't important. What matters is, I'm hosting lunch and for the first time ever my best friend is a welcomed guest in my home. We've forgotten the other kids we left playing on the street and that the sun is still shining. Visiting at my home is new to us and feels long overdue. The freedom we feel is everything.

Kim Spencer has written some short stories and focuses on writing creative nonfiction. She is from the Ts'msyen Nation in northwest British Columbia and currently lives in Vancouver, BC.

## LEVEL 14 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: An Electric Conflict

Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla are two of the most accomplished inventors. However, the two creators were from very different backgrounds. Edison was born in Ohio and quit school at age twelve. Tesla was born in present-day Croatia and studied at some of the most prestigious universities in Europe. Still, both inventors were determined to usher the world into the modern era. While they had the same goal, they tried to bring each other down. They were bitter rivals, in fact. Their conflict reached its peak in the late 1880s. This time would become known as the War of the Currents.

It is important to understand the times in which Tesla and Edison lived. Years before, an Italian physicist named Alessandro Volta created a battery that worked on direct current, or DC, electricity. DC electricity works by sending the flow of electricity in one direction. Scientists continued to expand upon Volta's work. Another form of electricity called alternating current, or AC electricity, came about in the 1830s. With AC electricity, the flow of electricity changes direction many times per second.

Both AC and DC power were available during Edison and Tesla's time. However, there wasn't much widespread use outside of laboratories. That all changed when Edison displayed his safe, long-lasting light bulb in December of 1879. Edison opened his first DC-powered electrical plant in 1882. People became excited about the possibilities of bringing light into their homes and businesses.

Edison's company was growing quickly, and Tesla was busy working in Europe. When Tesla's mentor said he was returning home to the United States, he encouraged Tesla to join him. Tesla arrived in New York in 1884 after a tumultuous journey in which most of his possessions were stolen. When Tesla arrived, he had only a few poems he had written, four cents in his pocket, ideas for a flying machine, and a letter of introduction to Edison. Edison quickly hired Tesla as an engineer. Initially, the two men got along well. Tesla impressed Edison with his attention to detail and ability to solve complex problems. However, they differed on one key topic. Edison championed DC electricity but Tesla was convinced AC electricity was more efficient. Eventually, Tesla quit working for Edison, with reports varying on what went wrong. Some people said that the men were just too different to work together. Other reports claimed that Tesla quit after Edison refused to pay Tesla \$50,000 he was owed (about \$1.4 million dollars in today's money).

Whatever the reason, Tesla wasted no time in trying to become Edison's competition. He quickly began his own electricity company but was ultimately pushed out of his own business. He then got a job digging ditches for \$2 a day while working on inventions that would run on AC electricity. Tesla then opened another company—the Tesla Electric Company. He finally got his break in 1888 when he sold several of his AC-electricity patents to a businessman named George Westinghouse. Westinghouse's company was Edison's main competition.

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Westinghouse paid Tesla \$60,000 in cash (about \$1.7 million today) for his AC-electricity designs.

Tesla's connections with Westinghouse helped him push forward. With the might of Westinghouse behind him, Tesla began to become a serious challenger to Edison's DC-based electrical company. Westinghouse wrote to Edison saying that the two companies should work together to usher in the future of an electrified nation. However, Edison knew that if more people adopted AC electricity, he would lose money on his DC-based electrical patents. So Edison told reporters untrue stories about how AC electricity was more dangerous than DC electricity. Edison said and did many terrible things, making Westinghouse livid to the point that Westinghouse and Tesla gave up on trying to cooperate with Edison.

The War of the Currents reached its peak in 1893. Officials at the Chicago World's Fair hired Westinghouse and Tesla to provide all the electric lighting for the event. Later that year, Westinghouse and Tesla successfully generated power from Niagara Falls. AC electricity had officially outpaced DC electricity. The War of the Currents was over.

Tesla's dominance in the War of the Currents ensured that AC electricity would be the primary electricity form in the United States for the next eighty years. Beginning in the 1970s, household electronics became more commonplace, which run on DC electricity. Today, homes and businesses have both AC and DC electricity. It seems a more subtle battle between AC and DC electricity will continue.

### **Skill Check: Emma and Paula**

Emma walked away from the basketball courts and over to her father's van, dribbling her ball the whole way there. Shreds of sunlight were starting to peek through the clouds. As if reminded how early it was, Emma released a weary yawn and stretched her neck from side to side. Basketball practice was exhausting, and she typically had two a day.

"How was practice today?" her father inquired as Emma plopped her gym bag on the floor and buckled her seatbelt.

Emma replied eagerly. "Really good, actually! Coach Warren thinks I may have a chance for the local scholarship."

"That's fantastic news, Emma," her father enthused with a clap of his hands. "I'm proud of all the hard work you've been putting in."

"Speaking of practice," Emma remarked, "it's been postponed for the next couple of days. They're repaving the cement on the outdoor courts." Her father nodded, and Emma continued to converse avidly about the scholarship for the rest of the drive.

Once home, Emma immediately followed the enticing aroma of sizzling soup into the kitchen. Already sitting at the table were her mother, Grandma Chung, and Paula—Emma's twin sister.

Emma looked at her bowl, flashed a wide grin from cheek to cheek, and started eating ravenously; she loved doengjang jjigae—a Korean soybean soup—which was her most beloved breakfast dish. And after a fatiguing practice in the crisp morning air, nothing tasted better than the warm, comforting spoonfuls of soup.

As the family ate, the twins were reminded that they would stay with Grandma Chung for the next few days while their parents were out of town. Their mother remarked that they should work together to ensure Grandma Chung was well taken care of. At that, Grandma Chung smiled at the twins and cracked a joke, "We'll see who ends up taking care of who."

Everyone at the table chuckled at Grandma Chung's wittiness. The girls' father noted, "The timing works out well, actually, since Emma's basketball practices were postponed for next week."

Emma nodded in acknowledgement, but her thoughts had gradually drifted somewhere else entirely. As much

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as she was determined to earn that scholarship, Emma was looking forward to a week of no practices and instead a week of relaxing and lounging around the house. How much work could it be to take care of Grandma Chung? she wondered.

The following morning, Emma screeched when the alarm went off, flying out of her deep slumber. Her eyes flew open and she reeled when she saw that the alarm clock displayed 6:00. I don't have practice today. I should be able to sleep in longer, Emma groaned. She stormed straight into the kitchen where she started shouting at Paula for setting her alarm so early.

Paula stood in the kitchen, seemingly oblivious to her sister's presence despite Emma's shouting. Like clockwork, Paula began peeling melons, pears, and tangerines over the sink. She then proceeded to carefully slice the fruits into symmetric pieces and arrange them neatly on a porcelain plate. Paula moved quickly and efficiently, gliding easily from task to task—which only irritated Emma more as she screeched about the time.

Paula put everything down and spun swiftly around to make eye contact with Emma.

"You think this is for us?" Paula asked incredulously, her hands up in the air in disbelief. "This is for Grandma Chung!"

Emma was caught completely off-guard and speechless. Remaining as patient as possible, Paula described the situation to Emma. At the beginning of the summer, the doctor recommended some changes to Grandma Chung's daily routine. The doctor recommended fresh fruit for breakfast, frequent stretching, and intermittent walks. Whenever their parents had to work or step out of the house for a bit, Paula would help care for Grandma Chung.

Emma stayed silent for a while, feeling both embarrassment and sadness. "I'm sorry, Paula. I didn't know. I haven't been around much because of basketball practice." Then she told Paula to put her to work—no matter the time of day.

When it came time to help, Emma felt helpless, stumbling around and utterly confused as she tried to learn from Paula. While Emma fumbled to follow the schedule, Paula executed everything seamlessly.

The most humbling moments were when they helped Grandma Chung stretch. At first, Emma was concerned that she might hurt her grandma, and so she barely applied any pressure which proved ineffective. However, Paula took the time to mentor Emma and after just a day or two, Emma could take the lead on helping Grandma Chung stretch.

It was the last morning before their parents returned from their trip. Thinking that she had woken up too late, Paula dashed out of her bedroom in a frenzy. When she got to the kitchen, she saw Grandma Chung and Emma already in there; Emma was slicing fruit while Grandma Chung was chatting with her friend on the phone. Emma glanced up at Paula and smiled.

"Don't worry, Paula. You should get some extra sleep. You deserve it," Emma said earnestly. "Really, I've got this covered."

## LEVEL 15 | ACTIVITY 1

### Units 3-6: Making Games More Accessible

*Written by a video game developer named Stuart Maine*

Some might think video games are accessible to everyone—after all, many people simply sit down in front of a game and push buttons or tap a screen to play. But for a long time, video games have excluded a lot of players. Game creators are working to fix the problem!

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## Action + Reaction

Games require players to act and react to changes as they play. They might have warning sounds or flashing objects that appear in the background, encouraging gamers to make decisions. But what if players have difficulty seeing a game's visuals? Or hearing its audio? If that's the case, those players won't have all the information to make the right choices. And if they struggle with the game's controls, then they may find it hard to tell the game what they want to do.

Let's look at different video game features in more detail and what the video game industry is doing to help make games more accessible to all players.

### The Visuals

Most games include text to read, but they often don't let players change the font or make text larger. This can be difficult for players with limited vision. And while most games let you change their brightness, not many let you adjust the color contrast. The option to customize font and contrast could help some players.

Another change games can make is to include color-blind options. The term color blindness covers a range of symptoms related to color perception, including an inability to tell red and green apart. Roughly 8 percent of males and 0.5 percent of females have red-green color blindness; that's almost 1 in every 10 people! Game designers' color choices could leave some of these players out. For example, some people won't be able to tell when a green warning icon changes color to red, so developers can now make that icon change size or shape and make a noise at the same time.

### The Sound

Players may struggle to make out overlapping sound effects, voices, and music if there aren't options to adjust them. But a larger problem is when a game requires hearing to play. For example, if players are warned about an approaching enemy only by a sound, then gamers who are hard of hearing may miss the warning. It would be better to flash warnings on the screen along with the sound effect.

Many games display subtitles similar to movies. Most games now subtitle everything characters say, and more and more games are including closed captions. This means important sounds and music changes are also displayed as text on screen.

### The Controls

Plenty of people take for granted the ability to hold a controller or a phone and press buttons or tap the screen. But if players have one hand, or can't hold a controller, then most games become impossible to play. Game creators can help a little by allowing players to choose which button performs which action. Also, there are now more flexible and inclusive controllers than existed in the past.

### More To Do

Despite the work developers are doing to make games more accessible, there is still a long way to go. There are no agreed-on "rules" for everyone to follow. Some small studios struggle to find the time to include accessibility options. New people joining the gaming industry aren't always taught how to make games accessible for people with disabilities in the first place.

### Why Accessibility Matters

Yes, the games industry is now better at including accessibility options so more people can play them, and those companies sell more copies of their games. But that's far from the only reason accessibility is important. Lynsey Graham, a senior designer at a games studio, sums it up: "Games are such a huge part of our culture...Books can be accessed as audiobooks and in Braille; cinemas do audio description, subtitled, and autism-friendly showings. It's important that everyone has the opportunity to access art and culture."

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### About the Author

Stuart Maine has worked as a video game designer for 23 years and is a firm believer that everyone should be able to enjoy gaming.

### Unit 9: Two of a Kind

There are African elephants and Asian elephants. In many ways, these elephants are the same. Let's compare them. Both elephants are related to the woolly mammoth. African elephants have trunks just like Asian elephants. The elephants are also similar in color. In addition, they are both plant-eating animals and live in herds, or groups.

Now, let's contrast them. What are some ways that these two elephants are different? Although African and Asian elephants have large ears, the African elephant's ears are larger. Female African elephants have tusks. However, female Asian elephants don't. African elephants have a dip in their backs, but Asian elephants have an arch instead.

### Units 11-14: Good Gaming

*Written by a video game developer named Stuart Maine*

I am a game developer. When my coworkers and I talk about "perfection" in games, whether video or board games, war games, or roleplaying games, we don't mean it in the way you might expect. That's because no game is the "best," and experts can't agree on what that would look like anyway. Instead, when game developers use the word perfect, they're talking about players "perfecting" how to play the game. And for the people making these games, it's usually a bad thing if that happens.

#### Games = Decisions

Consider Tic-Tac-Toe. This simple game of taking turns to write Xs and Os on a 3x3 grid can be fun for young kids, but you don't often see older kids, teens, or adults choosing to play it. The game isn't very wide or very deep, which means it doesn't take long for players to learn the best possible way to play it.

If you're the first player, as long as you start by placing your X in the center square or a corner, you may always win or tie. If the second player also knows to start in the center or a corner, every game may end in a draw—unless someone makes a mistake. These players are said to have "perfected" Tic-Tac-Toe. That means they've found the perfect (also called optimum) strategy to play that game and don't have to strategize which move is best. They can simply play on autopilot.

If players learned the skills needed to play the game and successfully completed every challenge, then they've perfected the game and are likely to get bored and move on to the next one.

#### The Heart of the Problem

So if you've perfected a game, it's no longer difficult to make decisions. You always know the right choice. And as I mentioned earlier, perfecting a game is bad because players often quit games that no longer challenge them. Game developers use two methods to ensure it's tough for players to perfect their games: adding depth or adding width.

#### Looking Closer at Width and Depth

The wider a game is, the more things there are for players to do in it. In video games, we call these "mechanics." They're all the possible actions you can take in a game. For example, in Minecraft, you can move, dig, fight, ride, jump, swim, and so on. Wide games are difficult to perfect because they offer so much to do that it takes a very long time to master every part of the game.

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On the other hand, deep games keep players interested by making their mechanics extremely difficult to grasp. They might do this by making their rules hard to understand, so you have fun figuring them out, or by including randomness, so you have to react to sudden surprises. Multiplayer games use the other players for the same effect, you never know what another player is going to do, so you have to keep reacting and changing your plans.

#### Which Is Better?

It's important to note that a wide game isn't better than a deep game, and the other way around. They're just two ways of achieving the goal of keeping players challenged and enjoying themselves. However, game designers must make choices carefully. Wide games tend to be expensive to make, as there are a lot of mechanics to create and polish, while deep games can feel scary to new players and might drive them away.

#### Making It Personal

Not everyone is looking for the same type of game. Next time you become hooked on a game, or find one boring, try to think about how wide and deep that game is. Are you enjoying the game because it has so much "stuff" so there's always something new to do? Or are you playing it because it's giving you a real challenge to try and master? While no game can ever be exactly right for everyone, at least you can find the games that are perfect for you.

#### About the Author

Stuart Maine has worked as a video game designer for 23 years and firmly believes that everyone should be able to enjoy gaming.

## LEVEL 15 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 3-6: "Losing Is Good for You"

*By Ashley Merryman*

LOS ANGELES—As children return to school this fall and sign up for a new year's worth of extracurricular activities, parents should keep one question in mind. Whether your kid loves Little League or gymnastics, ask the program organizers this: "Which kids get awards?" If the answer is, "Everybody gets a trophy," find another program.

Trophies were once rare things—sterling silver loving cups bought from jewelry stores for truly special occasions. But in the 1960s, they began to be mass-produced, marketed in catalogs to teachers and coaches, and sold in sporting goods stores.

Today, participation trophies and prizes are almost a given, as children are constantly assured that they are winners. One Maryland summer program gives awards every day—and the "day" is one hour long. In Southern California, a regional branch of the American Youth Soccer Organization hands out roughly 3,500 awards each season—each player gets one, while around a third get two. Nationally, A.Y.S.O. local branches typically spend as much as 12 percent of their yearly budgets on trophies. It adds up: trophy and award sales are now an estimated \$3 billion-a-year industry in the United States and Canada.

Po Bronson and I have spent years reporting on the effects of praise and rewards on kids. The science is clear. Awards can be powerful motivators, but nonstop recognition does not inspire children to succeed. Instead, it can cause them to underachieve.

Carol Dweck, a psychology professor at Stanford University, found that kids respond positively to praise; they enjoy hearing that they're talented, smart and so on. But after such praise of their innate abilities, they collapse at the first experience of difficulty. Demoralized by their failure, they say they'd rather cheat than risk failing again.

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In recent eye-tracking experiments by the researchers Bradley Morris and Shannon Zentall, kids were asked to draw pictures. Those who heard praise suggesting they had an innate talent were then twice as fixated on mistakes they'd made in their pictures.

By age 4 or 5, children aren't fooled by all the trophies. They are surprisingly accurate in identifying who excels and who struggles. Those who are outperformed know it and give up, while those who do well feel cheated when they aren't recognized for their accomplishments. They, too, may give up.

It turns out that, once kids have some proficiency in a task, the excitement and uncertainty of real competition may become the activity's very appeal. If children know they will automatically get an award, what is the impetus for improvement? Why bother learning problem-solving skills, when there are never obstacles to begin with?

If I were a baseball coach, I would announce at the first meeting that there would be only three awards: Best Overall, Most Improved and Best Sportsmanship. Then I'd hand the kids a list of things they'd have to do to earn one of those trophies. They would know from the get-go that excellence, improvement, character and persistence were valued.

It's accepted that, before punishing children, we must consider their individual levels of cognitive and emotional development. Then we monitor them, changing our approach if there's a negative outcome. However, when it comes to rewards, people argue that kids must be treated identically: everyone must always win. That is misguided. And there are negative outcomes. Not just for specific children, but for society as a whole.

In June, an Oklahoma Little League canceled participation trophies because of a budget shortfall. A furious parent complained to a local reporter, "My children look forward to their trophy as much as playing the game." That's exactly the problem, says Jean Twenge, author of "Generation Me."

Having studied recent increases in narcissism and entitlement among college students, she warns that when living rooms are filled with participation trophies, it's part of a larger cultural message: to succeed, you just have to show up. In college, those who've grown up receiving endless awards do the requisite work, but don't see the need to do it well. In the office, they still believe that attendance is all it takes to get a promotion. In life, "you're going to lose more often than you win, even if you're good at something," Ms. Twenge told me. "You've got to get used to that to keep going."

When children make mistakes, our job should not be to spin those losses into decorated victories. Instead, our job is to help kids overcome setbacks, to help them see that progress over time is more important than a particular win or loss, and to help them graciously congratulate the child who succeeded when they failed. To do that, we need to refuse all the meaningless plastic and tin destined for landfills. We have to stop letting the Trophy-Industrial Complex run our children's lives.

This school year, let's fight for a kid's right to lose.

## Unit 9: Good for You

Music is good for the human brain. Playing and listening to music has many benefits. Research shows that learning to play a musical instrument increases fine motor skills and attention. Listening to upbeat music produces positive feelings. Additionally, Doctor Otto Hilton says, "Listening to music enhances memory even in older patients with memory loss." Furthermore, a recent study showed that listening to classical music for just 15 minutes improved student performance on IQ tests. Both playing and listening to music have many positive effects on the mind.

**Unit 10: Dogs Are Great!**

Dogs make great companions. People who have pet dogs live happier and healthier lives. Many studies in recent years show that pet ownership directly impacts the owner's happiness. A recent university study showed that just five minutes of petting a dog releases the hormones in the brain responsible for happiness. "Owning a dog also increases interaction with other people, which can lead to an improved sense of wellbeing," says Doctor Angela Cooper. The positive impact of pet ownership on health has been scientifically proven. In 1999, Swedish researchers found that young children who lived with a pet dog had fewer allergies. Additionally, walking a pet dog has been shown to contribute to lower blood pressure, which reduces the chances of a heart attack. Not only do dogs make excellent pets, they help their owners feel great and live longer.

**Units 11-14: Make the School Day Longer**

No matter what we want to learn—baking bread, water-skiing, or computer coding—we expect to put in enough time to master it. Time matters! If we want our students to master their learning, they need to put in the time. And a longer school day helps them do just that.

First of all, student achievement rises with more time focused on schoolwork. One study analyzed math and language-arts test results of 47,000 ninth- and tenth- graders in 72 countries. The results pointed to the benefits of extra time in class. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development releases school rankings based on those same standardized test scores. According to their study, Shanghai, China, has the highest-achieving school system in the world. Shanghai high-schoolers spend nine hours a day in school.

In other countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, too many students are falling behind in achievement. There's a big gap between test scores of students from high-income and low-income homes. One reason for that gap is opportunity. Low-income students simply don't have the chance for private tutoring, after-school enrichment programs, and other learning experiences that wealthier families can afford. A longer school day can help bridge that gap. It allows time for targeted academic tutoring, along with programs in sports, art, music, technology, and more. These experiences help students discover that learning is not only satisfying—it's exciting!

Why does a school day typically end at 3:00 or 3:30 in the afternoon? That schedule came about long ago, when children had to help their families on farms. Few students are doing farm chores after school these days. In fact, the hours between 3 and 6 PM are the most dangerous times for kids to be on the streets. According to the FBI, violent crimes involving young people reach their highest point between 3 and 4 PM on school days. Most working adults are not at home in the afternoon, so they're unable to supervise their children. School is a safer place to be.

Critics argue that a longer day isn't likely to make students in those schools suddenly score higher on tests. Supporters of expanded hours actually agree with that point. Chris Gabrieli, author of *Time to Learn*, argues for longer school days. However, he notes that, "Nothing considered by itself is enough to turn schools around—not the most gifted teachers, most inspiring principals, newest buildings, or most up-to-date equipment." He stresses that, "It's the quality of the time that makes the difference."

A longer school day makes it possible to improve schools in many ways. Teachers have more time to share ideas and plan lessons. Students have time to complete projects in core academic subjects. There's more time for art, music, sports, and enriching experiences. Time matters—especially at school!"





## LEVEL 15 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 3-6: "Harlem"

*By Langston Hughes*

What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up / like a raisin in the sun? / Or fester like a sore— And then run? / Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over— / like a syrupy sweet? / Maybe it just sags / like a heavy load. / Or does it explode?

### Unit 9: The House on the Corner

It was a dark and stormy night. The house on the corner, rundown and condemned by the city, seemed especially creepy. No one had lived there in years. But rumor had it the house wasn't actually empty. Something was in there. Curiosity had finally gotten the best of Aaron and his friends. Tonight, they would figure out what lurked inside that house. As they left their bikes on the lawn, they heard the wind pick up. They'd have to hurry before it began pouring.

"There it is," Max yelled. "I saw something move by the window on the second floor!"

Slowly, they opened the front door. All three boys winced as the hinges creaked. The noise must have startled whatever it was. They heard a whoosh and a thump. Then another thump.

"Forget it. Let's just turn back," Max said in a small, trembling voice.

Aaron was rattled too, but he didn't let it show. "No, we're already here. Don't be a chicken," he snapped.

"Yeah, he's right," Trevor agreed. "Let's find out."

They made their way cautiously up the stairs. Another thump came from the room at the end of the hall. They looked at each other wondering who would run back down the stairs first. No one made a move. Aaron took a step toward the door. "On the count of three," he whispered. "One, two, three!" He yanked the door open.

All at once they laughed with a mixture of relief and amusement. The creature wasn't terrifying at all. It was an old jacket hanging on a hook by the open window. The gusting wind was just strong enough to make the jacket flap against the sill.

"But...who does the jacket belong to?" Max wondered aloud just as the boys heard the sound of footsteps on the creaking stairs below.

### Units 11-14: "Dreams"

*By Langston Hughes*

Hold fast to dreams / For if dreams die / Life is a broken-winged bird That cannot fly. / Hold fast to dreams / For when dreams go / Life is a barren field / Frozen with snow.

## LEVEL 15 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 3-6: Civic Responsibility (Smithsonian)

Before you read:

During World War II, the citizens of the United States and the United Kingdom were part of the home front. Home front was the term used to describe the activities of civilians that supported the war effort. Citizens, young and old, were asked to raise money, recycle, and do without new clothes and other luxuries. Many citizens found

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themselves doing new jobs. Women in both countries were trained to work in factories in record numbers. Colorful posters reminded the home front in both the United States and the United Kingdom of their critical role in the war effort. The home front boosted the morale of citizens and soldiers alike and had a significant impact on the outcome of the war.

Nothing in America went unchanged by World War II. More than 16 million men and women—more than one-tenth of the population—served in the armed forces. More than 400,000 never returned. Those who remained at home found themselves taking on the responsibilities of citizen soldiers at every turn of their daily lives. Decisions that were once only personal—what to buy, what to eat, how to spend free time—now had global consequences. To explain these civic responsibilities, and to encourage a voluntary spirit, the U.S. government launched the biggest advertising and public relations campaign in history. Posters were an important part of the campaign to get the messages out.

### **Factory Work**

Factories across America increased production to make military weapons and equipment. By the end of the war, the U.S. was making half of the entire world's manufactured goods.

### *Arsenal of Democracy*

In December of 1940, one year before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt called on the country to become the arsenal of democracy. That year, Nazi Germany had overrun Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France. Only Britain stood in the way of Nazi control of the Atlantic. The United States would soon unleash its productive might to send weapons, raw materials, and food to Britain and other allies.

### *Women in the Workforce*

Most young men entered the military. At the same time, millions of women entered the workforce. Many women filled roles that had never before been open to them. Ford Motor Company, for instance, lifted a ban on hiring women for any position other than secretarial. At one point, women made up nearly half of the workforce at a Ford bomber plant in Michigan.

### *The Factory as a Battlefield*

American factories were building thousands of ships, tanks, airplanes, and guns. War posters sent a message that every bit of effort contributed to winning the war. These posters also claimed that every sick day, every extra minute on a break, and every broken tool helped the enemy. Posters covered factory walls as a reminder that the workplace, too, was a battlefield.

### **War Bonds**

The growth in production pushed the United States out of the Great Depression and into a thriving economy. But the government still needed a way to pay for the cost of another war.

### *Own a Share in America*

The government savings-bond program became a popular effort to raise money to support overseas troops. Savings bonds are certificates sold by the government to citizens with a promise to pay back the purchase price, plus interest, after a certain time period. During the war, these savings bonds were called Defense Bonds or War Bonds. The government used the money from the sales of bonds to pay for the war. Americans were encouraged to "own a share in America."

### *Hollywood Helps Out*

If a sense of duty was the selling point of the bonds, the campaign was helped along by an American sense of flash and fun. Hollywood celebrities appeared at "Stars over America" bond rallies across the country. Lana Turner alone raised \$5.25 million by offering kisses to bond buyers. In 1944, bond purchases served as admission for a circus-like, three-way baseball game at the Polo Grounds in New York, in which the Brooklyn Dodgers defeated both the Yankees and the Giants. The event raised \$56.5 million.



### *An All-American Effort*

By the end of the war, more than 85 million Americans, out of a population of 139 million, owned bonds. Millions had participated in drives run by groups such as Scout troops, men's lodges, women's clubs, and union locals to sell bonds. It's been estimated that the federal government spent \$340 billion on the war, and that's in 1940s dollars. Nearly half of that came from bond sales.

### **Conservation**

During World War II, factories and farms in the United States focused their efforts on supplying the military. That meant there were far fewer goods for American consumers. Government posters reminded citizens of the reasons for the shortages. Americans were asked to practice conservation. To conserve means to prevent waste or loss, and that's exactly what people did.

### *Waste Not, Want Not*

Government posters also recommended saving food and reusing consumer products. Children and adults alike were told to avoid waste by cleaning their plates. Americans also began saving bacon grease because the recycled fat could be used to make ammunition and medicine. In addition, aluminum can drives and the "Save your scrap" campaign collected products to be recycled into ammunition.

### *Grow It Yourself*

Some posters advocated growing fruit and vegetables in a home or community Victory Garden. At one point during the war, Victory Gardens were responsible for almost one third of the vegetables produced by the United States. Even Eleanor Roosevelt pitched in by planting a Victory Garden on the White House lawn.

### *Fashion Shortcuts*

Fashion trends were also shaped by wartime shortages. Materials typically used to make clothing were taken for military use. Long evening gowns went out of style because materials needed to be conserved for the war effort. Shirt cuffs, pleats, vests, and wide padded shoulders also became unfashionable. To the alarm of many older Americans, a new trend took off: two-piece women's swimsuits.

During World War II, the importance of civic responsibility was stressed on every occasion. This idea, in one way or another, was found on nearly every poster: the defense of freedom depends on individual responsibility, freely chosen.

## **Unit 8: Fruits Rock!**

Fruits are amazing in many ways. Fruits are healthful. They have vitamins. They reduce the risk of disease. Fruits are plentiful. There are between 1,000 and 2,000 different kinds. They make up a large part of farming production. Fruits are not just for eating. Some fruits can be used as natural dyes. Bayberries can be used to make candles.

## **Unit 9: Whoa, Hold Your Seahorses!**

They have a tail and a head that looks somewhat like a horse. They live in the sea. So, seahorse is not a totally unexpected name for this unique fish that is found in seas around the world. Seahorses are bony fish that do not have scales like other fish. Their bodies are covered with a thin skin. The skin covers rings of bony plates. Seahorses swim upright—like they are standing and swimming at the same time. However, this unusual swimming position means they are not fast swimmers. The seahorse has a prehensile tail. Prehensile means able to grasp. A seahorse can use its tail to grasp and hold onto a piece of seaweed to stay in one place. This is how it hides from enemies.

## **Units 11-14: Marvels of Construction**

Throughout the world, certain human-made structures inspire awe. Unique towers, walls, and buildings are

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instantly recognizable as national symbols. Two of the world's most amazing constructions are the Great Pyramid of Egypt and the Taj Mahal of India. Both were built as tombs.

### **The Great Pyramid**

Three huge, well-preserved pyramids stand on the Giza Plateau, near Cairo, Egypt. The Great Pyramid is the largest. Its size, along with its unusual rooms and passageways, make it especially fascinating.

#### *The Afterlife*

The Great Pyramid was completed around 2540 BC, in preparation for the funeral rituals for King Khufu, the ruler who ordered its construction. The afterlife was central to ancient Egyptian culture. Khufu wanted to ensure that he would have everything he needed for his life after death. That included his body, which was mummified. It also included the clothing, furniture, and magnificent treasures possessed by a ruler like himself. And all of those things would need to be safely protected, forever, inside a monumental construction bigger and better than any made before. Unfortunately, tomb robbers discovered Khufu and his treasures and stole them. The rooms of the Great Pyramid have since remained empty.

#### *Outside and Inside*

The walls of the Great Pyramid were made of limestone blocks. Granite was used in interior rooms. Workers cut the stone in quarries and dragged the blocks to the construction site. White limestone casing covered the sides of the pyramid. Few of the casing stones are left. But when the Great Pyramid was built, it gleamed like a giant white jewel.

#### *Facts and Figures:*

- Original height of the Great Pyramid: 481 feet
- Area of base: approximately 13 acres
- Average weight of stone blocks: 2.5 tons
- Number of blocks: more than 2 million
- Estimated number of workers: 100,000

#### *Mysteries*

Ancient Egyptians had no pulleys, wheeled carts, or iron tools. Workers cut the blocks using stone and copper tools. But how did they move and lift such massive stones? No one really knows, but we can guess that the blocks were most likely placed on sleds and pulled with ropes by teams of men. Workers must have used ramps to position the blocks, level by level as they built up the pyramid. But modern experts, who still marvel at the engineering problems that the planners solved, remain unsure of exactly how the ramps were used.

### **The Taj Mahal**

The Taj Mahal is located in Agra, in northern India. It has been called the most expensive tomb in the world—and the most beautiful.

#### *Shah Jahan's Masterpiece*

Shah Jahan ruled the Mughal Empire in India from 1628 to 1658. Shah Jahan's favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, died in 1631 after giving birth to their fourteenth child. Her grief-stricken husband hired the best architects and artisans in the empire to create her tomb. He spared no expense. It took about 15 years and 20,000 workers to complete the Taj Mahal.

#### *Beautiful Balance*

The Mughal rulers were Muslim, and they brought Islamic cultural influences to India. The period of Mughal rule, during the 1500s and 1600s, is known for its glorious art and architecture. All parts of the Taj Mahal are in perfect balance, which is one reason the structure is so striking and pleasing. This type of balance is known as symmetry. Twin sandstone buildings—a mosque and a guest house—stand on either side of the tomb. Four towers, or

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minarets, surround the tomb. The tomb is covered in white marble inlaid with gems. Decorative floral patterns, ornate carvings, and calligraphy reveal the superb skills of artisans of the time.

### *More Than a Building*

The Taj Mahal is much more than a tomb. Shah Jahan wanted his beloved's resting place to be an earthly replica of the gateway and gardens of Paradise. The Great Gate prepares visitors for the grand view of water and tomb. The site covers 42 acres, with buildings, gates, pools, water channels, and gardens. As Shah Jahan's historian noted 400 years ago, "... it will be a masterpiece for ages to come, increasing the amazement of all humanity."

Both the Great Pyramid and the Taj Mahal are important parts of world history. UNESCO is the United Nations organization that works to preserve and protect the "cultural and natural heritage around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity." It's no surprise that two UNESCO World Heritage sites are the Great Pyramid and the Taj Mahal.

## LEVEL 16 | ACTIVITY 1

### **Units 3-6: A Dog's Purpose**

*An excerpt from the book by W. Bruce Cameron*

Prologue:

Bailey, a once lost and abandoned Golden Retriever, has found love and true happiness with his boy named Ethan—in spite of a cat named Smokey. One day Ethan, his mom and dad, and Bailey take a long car ride to a place called the Farm. An old woman and an old man come out of a white house to greet them. Ethan calls them Grandma and Grandpa. Dad leaves after a few days. Mom, Ethan, and Bailey stay on the Farm for the rest of the summer.

Eventually, I discovered (much to my disappointment) that the Farm had a cat, a black one, who lived in an old, collapsing building called the barn. She always watched me, crouched in the darkness, whenever I took it into my head to go in there and try to sniff her out. This cat seemed afraid of me and therefore was a major improvement over Smokey, just like everything at this place.

And one day, I thought I saw the black cat in the woods and took off in hot pursuit, though she was waddling slowly and, as I got close, revealed that she was something else entirely, a whole new animal, with white stripes down her black body. Delighted, I barked at her, and she turned and gave me a solemn look, her fluffy black tail held high up in the air. She wasn't running, which I figured meant she wanted to play, but when I jumped in to paw at her, the animal did the most curious thing, turning away from me, her tail still in the air.

The next thing I knew, a plume of horrid smell enveloped my nose, stinging my eyes and lips. Blinded, yelping, I retreated, wondering what in the world had just happened.

"Skunk," Grandpa announced when I scratched at the door to be let in. "Oh, you're not coming in, Bailey."

"Bailey, did you get into a skunk?" Mom asked me through the screen door, "Ugh, you sure did." I didn't know this word "skunk," but I knew that something very odd had occurred out there in the woods, and it was followed by something odder still—wrinkling up his nose at me, the boy took me out into the yard and wetted me down with a hose. He held my head while Grandma carted up a basket of tomatoes from the garden and squeezed the tart juices all over my fur, turning it red.

I couldn't see how any of this helped matters any, particularly since I was then subjected to the indignity of what Ethan informed me was a bath. Perfumed soap was rubbed into my wet fur until I smelled like a cross between Mom and a tomato.

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I had never been so thoroughly humiliated in my life. When I was dry, I was consigned to the porch, and though Ethan slept out there with me, he kicked me out of his bed.

"You stink, Bailey," he said.

The assault on my person thus complete, I lay on the floor and tried to sleep despite the riot of odors wafting around the room. When morning finally came I ran down to the pond and rolled in a dead fish that had washed up onshore, but not even that helped, much—I still smelled like perfume.

Eager to figure out what had happened, I went back into the woods to see if I could find that catlike animal and get an explanation. Now that I knew her scent, she wasn't hard to locate, but I'd hardly begun to sniff at her when the same exact thing happened, a blinding spray that hit me from, of all places, the animal's rear end.

I couldn't figure out how to resolve this misunderstanding and wondered if I wouldn't be better off just ignoring the animal altogether, making her suffer for all the ignominy she had put me through.

In fact, that's exactly what I decided to do once I trotted home and was put through the entire cycle of washings and tomato juice dunkings again—was this my life, now? Every day I'd be slathered in vegetables, have stinky soaps rubbed into me, and be barred from entry into the main part of the house, even when Grandma was cooking?

"You are so stupid, Bailey!" the boy scolded me while he scrubbed me out in the yard.

"Don't use the word 'stupid': it is such an ugly word." Grandma said, "Tell him he's a doodle: that's what my mother always called me when I was a little girl and I did something wrong."

The boy faced me sternly, "Bailey, you are a doodle dog. You are a doodle, doodle dog." And then he laughed and Grandma laughed, but I was so miserable I could barely move my tail."

### Units 6-13: Hatchet

*An excerpt from the book by Gary Paulsen*

Before this excerpt:

Brian Robeson is a thirteen-year-old boy who finds himself lost in the Canadian wilderness. His plane crashed into a nearby lake after traveling many miles from its scheduled path. Brian has only his hatchet and his wits to help him survive. He is hungry, afraid, and unprepared for all of the challenges he will encounter in the wilderness. After 47 days in the wilderness, he is still learning many difficult lessons about survival

Mistakes.

Small mistakes could turn into disasters, funny little mistakes could snowball so that while you were still smiling at the humor you could find yourself looking at death. In the city if he made a mistake usually there was a way to rectify it, make it all right. If he fell on his bike and sprained a leg he could wait for it to heal; if he forgot something at the store he could find other food in the refrigerator.

Now it was different, and all so quick, all so incredibly quick. If he sprained a leg here he might starve before he could get around again; if he missed while he was hunting or if the fish moved away he might starve. If he got sick, really sick so he couldn't move he might starve.

Mistakes.

Early in the new time he had learned the most important thing, the truly vital knowledge that drives all creatures in the forest—food is all. Food was simply everything. All things in the woods, from insects to fish to bears, were always, always looking for food—it was the great, single driving influence in nature. To eat. All must eat.

But the way he learned it almost killed him. His second new night, stomach full of fish and the fire smoldering in the shelter, he had been sound asleep when something—he thought later it might be smell—had awakened him.

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Near the fire, completely unafraid of the smoking coals, completely unafraid of Brian, a skunk was digging where he had buried the eggs. There was some sliver of a moon and in the faint-pearl light he could see the bushy tail, the white stripes down the back, and he had nearly smiled. He did not know how the skunk had found the eggs, some smell, perhaps some tiny fragment of shell had left a smell, but it looked almost cute, its little head down and its little tail up as it dug and dug, kicking the sand back.

But those were his eggs, not the skunk's, and the half smile had been quickly replaced with fear that he would lose his food and he had grabbed a handful of sand and thrown it at the skunk.

"Get out of here..."

He was going to say more, some silly human words, but in less than half a second the skunk had snapped its rear end up, curved the tail over, and sprayed Brian with a direct shot aimed at his head from less than four feet away.

In the tiny confines of the shelter the effect was devastating. The thick sulfurous rotten odor filled the small room, heavy, ugly, and stinking. The corrosive spray that hit his face seared into his lungs and eyes, blinding him.

He screamed and threw himself sideways, taking the entire wall off the shelter; screamed and clawed out of the shelter and fell-ran to the shore of the lake. Stumbling and tripping, he scrambled into the water and slammed his head back and forth trying to wash his eyes, slashing at the water to clear his eyes.

A hundred funny cartoons he had seen about skunks. Cute cartoons about the smell of skunks, cartoons to laugh at and joke about, but when the spray hit there was nothing funny about it—he was completely blind for almost two hours. A lifetime. He thought that he might be permanently blind, or at least impaired—and that would have been the end. As it was the pain in his eyes lasted for days, bothered him after that for two weeks. The smell in the shelter, in his clothes, and in his hair was still there now, almost a month and a half later.

And he had nearly smiled.

Mistakes.

Food had to be protected. While he was in the lake trying to clear his eyes the skunk went ahead and dug up the rest of the turtle eggs and ate every one. Licked all the shells clean and couldn't have cared less that Brian was thrashing around in the water like a dying carp. The skunk had found food and was taking it and Brian was paying for a lesson.

## LEVEL 16 | ACTIVITY 2

### Units 2-5 and 10-13: An excerpt from "President John F. Kennedy's The Moon Speech"

Setting the Scene: An Introduction

On September 20, 1962, President John F. Kennedy delivers a speech at Rice University in Houston, Texas. President Kennedy has already presented his national goal of landing on the moon to Congress. However, the United States is continuing to fall behind in the space race with the Soviet Union. In this speech, he wants to get the public excited about being the first country to put a man on the moon. His speech is entitled "Address at Rice University on the Nation's Space Effort." Today, it is better known informally as the "We Choose to Go to the Moon" speech, or simply "The Moon Speech."

But if I were to say, my fellow citizens, that we shall send to the moon, 240,000 miles away from the control station in Houston, a giant rocket more than 300 feet tall, the length of this football field, made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than have ever been experienced, fitted together with a precision better than the finest watch, carrying all the equipment needed for propulsion, guidance, control, communications, food and survival, on an untried mission, to an

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unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth, re-entering the atmosphere at speeds of over 25,000 miles per hour, causing heat about half that of the temperature of the sun—almost as hot as it is here today—and do all this, and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out—then we must be bold.

I'm the one who is doing all the work, so we just want you to stay cool for a minute. [laughter]

However, I think we're going to do it, and I think that we must pay what needs to be paid. I don't think we ought to waste any money, but I think we ought to do the job. And this will be done in the decade of the sixties. It may be done while some of you are still here at school at this college and university. It will be done during the terms of office of some of the people who sit here on this platform. But it will be done. And it will be done before the end of this decade. And I am delighted that this university is playing a part in putting a man on the moon as a part of a great national effort of the United States of America.

Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, "Because it is there." Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked.

Thank you.

### **Units 6-13: "Apollo Anniversary: Moon Landing 'Inspired World'"**

*By John Roach*

On July 20, 1969, at 10:56 p.m. ET, Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong stepped off the "Eagle" onto the surface of the moon and said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Thirty-five years later, Steven Dick, NASA's chief historian at the space agency's headquarters in Washington, D.C., said that a thousand years from now, that step may be considered the crowning achievement of the 20th century.

"Putting a man on the moon not only inspired the nation, but also the world," Dick said. "The 1960s were a tumultuous time in the U.S., and the moon landing showed what could be accomplished at a time when much else was going wrong."

Armstrong's step was the culmination of a goal set forth by President John F. Kennedy on May 25, 1961. In a speech before a joint session of Congress, the President had announced his objective of "landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth" before the end of the decade.

The goal set in motion Project Apollo. Armstrong—together with astronauts Michael Collins and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin, Jr.—lifted off on the Apollo 11 mission on July 16, 1969, from Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 9:32 a.m. ET.

About 76 hours later, the spacecraft entered lunar orbit. Armstrong and Aldrin boarded the lunar module, known as the Eagle, for descent to the lunar surface. There, it landed in a region called the Sea of Tranquility at 4:18 p.m. ET.

Armstrong took his historic step six hours later, as millions of people around the world watched on television. The landing drew the largest television audience for any live event up until that time.

Jeffrey Bennett, a noted astronomy teacher and writer, said that accomplishing Kennedy's goal gave society great hope for the future.

"There are many ways to show people the great possibilities of the future, but I'd argue that the visibility of the moon in the sky [is] more powerful than any other single source of inspiration," said Bennett, who is affiliated with the Center for Astrophysics and Astronomy at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

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### Technology Inspiration

The inspiration provided by the goal of sending humans to the moon is credited for laying the groundwork for, and making widely available, a host of technologies that society depends on today.

As an example, Dick points to the integrated circuit, commonly referred to as a computer chip. The Apollo Guidance Computer, used for the Apollo program, was the largest single consumer of integrated circuits between 1961 and 1965.

"NASA did not invent the integrated circuit, but a good case could be made that it played a major role in making the integrated circuit commercially viable," he said.

In addition to encouraging the push toward the development of the personal computer, Bennett also credits the Apollo program for sowing the seeds of the Internet.

"I wouldn't attribute the technological advances solely to Apollo, but I do think that the inspiration of 'we're going to the moon' made things happen much more quickly than they would have happened otherwise," Bennett said.

Once on the moon, Armstrong and Aldrin spent about two and a half hours exploring the surface. They collected 47 pounds (21 kilograms) of surface material to be returned to Earth for analysis.

Over the next several years, space scientists continued to visit and study the moon, learning about its composition, age, and rocks, and about the similarities between the moon and Earth. Extensive testing found no evidence of life, past or present, on the moon.

Active human exploration of the moon came to an end on December 19, 1972, when Apollo 17 splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, ending a 12-day mission.

"The moon program was a race, and when we won that race, interest dwindled from the political point of view," Dick said. "But not from the scientific point of view. Scientists remained eager to learn even more."

## LEVEL 16 | ACTIVITY 3

### Units 2-5 and 10-13: "All Summer in a Day"

*An excerpt from the short story by Ray Bradbury*

"Ready?"

"Ready."

"Now?"

"Soon."

The children pressed to each other like so many roses, so many weeds, intermixed, peering out for a look at the hidden sun.

It rained.

It had been raining for seven years; thousands upon thousands of days compounded and filled from one end to the other with rain, with the drum and gush of water, with the sweet crystal fall of showers and the concussion of storms so heavy they were tidal waves come over the islands. A thousand forests had been crushed under the rain and grown up a thousand times to be crushed again. And this was the way life was forever on the planet Venus, and this was the schoolroom of the children of the rocket men and women who had come to a raining world to set up civilization and live out their lives.

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"It's stopping, it's stopping!" "Yes, yes!"

Margot stood apart from them, from these children who could never remember a time when there wasn't rain and rain and rain. They were all nine years old, and if there had been a day, seven years ago, when the sun came out for an hour and showed its face to the stunned world, they could not recall.

Sometimes, at night, she heard them stir, in remembrance, and she knew they were dreaming and remembering gold or a yellow crayon or a coin large enough to buy the world with. She knew they thought they remembered a warmth, like a blushing in the face, in the body, in the arms and legs and trembling hands. But then they always awoke to the tatting drum, the endless shaking down of clear bead necklaces upon the roof, the walk, the gardens, the forests, and their dreams were gone.

All day yesterday they had read in class about the sun. About how like a lemon it was, and how hot. And they had written small stories or essays or poems about it:

I think the sun is a flower, That blooms for just one hour.

That was Margot's poem, read in a quiet voice in the still classroom while the rain was falling outside. "Aw, you didn't write that!" protested one of the boys.

"I did," said Margot. "I did."

"William!" said the teacher.

But that was yesterday. Now the rain was slackening, and the children were crushed in the great thick windows.

"Where's teacher?"

"She'll be back."

"She'd better hurry, we'll miss it!"

They turned on themselves, like a feverish wheel, all tumbling spokes.

Margot stood alone. She was a very frail girl who looked as if she had been lost in the rain for years and the rain had washed out the blue from her eyes and the red from her mouth and the yellow from her hair. She was an old photograph dusted from an album, whitened away, and if she spoke at all her voice would be a ghost. Now she stood, separate, staring at the rain and the loud wet world beyond the huge glass.

"What're you looking at?" said William. Margot said nothing.

"Speak when you're spoken to." He gave her a shove. But she did not move; rather she let herself be moved only by him and nothing else.

They edged away from her, they would not look at her. She felt them go away. And this was because she would play no games with them in the echoing tunnels of the underground city. If they tagged her and ran, she stood blinking after them and did not follow. When the class sang songs about happiness and life and games her lips barely moved. Only when they sang about the sun and the summer did her lips move as she watched the drenched windows.

And then, of course, the biggest crime of all was that she had come here only five years ago from Earth, and she remembered the sun and the way the sun was and the sky was when she was four in Ohio. And they, they had been on Venus all their lives, and they had been only two years old when last the sun came out and had long since forgotten the color and heat of it and the way it really was. But Margot remembered.

"It's like a penny," she said once, eyes closed.

"No it's not!" the children cried.

"It's like a fire," she said, "in the stove."

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"You're lying, you don't remember!" cried the children.

But she remembered and stood quietly apart from all of them and watched the patterning windows. And once, a month ago, she had refused to shower in the school shower rooms, had clutched her hands to her ears and over her head, screaming the water mustn't touch her head. So after that, dimly, dimly, she sensed it, she was different and they knew her difference and kept away.

There was talk that her father and mother were taking her back to Earth next year; it seemed vital to her that they do so, though it would mean the loss of thousands of dollars to her family. And so, the children hated her for all these reasons of big and little consequence. They hated her pale snow face, her waiting silence, her thinness, and her possible future.

## LEVEL 16 | ACTIVITY 4

### Units 2-5 and 10-13: "All Summer in a Day"

*An excerpt from the short story by Ray Bradbury*

"Get away!" The boy gave her another push. "What're you waiting for?"

Then, for the first time, she turned and looked at him. And what she was waiting for was in her eyes.

"Well, don't wait around here!" cried the boy savagely: "You won't see nothing!"

Her lips moved.

"Nothing!" he cried. "It was all a joke, wasn't it?" He turned to the other children. "Nothing's happening today: Is it?"

They all blinked at him and then, understanding, laughed and shook their heads. "Nothing, nothing!"

"Oh, but," Margot whispered, her eyes helpless. "But this is the day, the scientists predict, they say, they know, the sun. . ."

"All a joke!" said the boy, and seized her roughly. "Hey, everyone, let's put her in a closet before teacher comes!"

"No," said Margot, falling back.

They surged about her, caught her up and bore her, protesting, and then pleading, and then crying, back into a tunnel, a room, a closet, where they slammed and locked the door. They stood looking at the door and saw it tremble from her beating and throwing herself against it. They heard her muffled cries. Then, smiling, they turned and went out and back down the tunnel, just as the teacher arrived.

"Ready, children?" She glanced at her watch. "Yes!" said everyone. "Are we all here?" "Yes!"

The rain slackened still more. They crowded to the huge door. The rain stopped. It was as if, in the midst of a film, concerning an avalanche, a tornado, a hurricane, a volcanic eruption, something had, first, gone wrong with the sound apparatus, thus muffling and finally cutting off all noise, all of the blasts and repercussions and thunders, and then, second, ripped the film from the projector and inserted in its place a peaceful tropical slide which did not move or tremor. The world ground to a standstill. The silence was so immense and unbelievable that you felt your ears had been stuffed or you had lost your hearing altogether. The children put their hands to their ears. They stood apart. The door slid back and the smell of the silent, waiting world came in to them.

The sun came out.

It was the color of flaming bronze and it was very large. And the sky around it was a blazing blue tile color. And the jungle burned with sunlight as the children, released from their spell, rushed out, yelling, into the springtime.

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"Now, don't go too far," called the teacher after them. "You've only two hours, you know. You wouldn't want to get caught out!"

But they were running and turning their faces up to the sky and feeling the sun on their cheeks like a warm iron; they were taking off their jackets and letting the sun burn their arms.

"Oh, it's better than the sunlamps, isn't it?" "Much, much better!"

They stopped running and stood in the great jungle that covered Venus, that grew and never stopped growing, tumultuously, even as you watched it. It was a nest of octopi, clustering up great arms of flesh-like weed, wavering, flowering this brief spring. It was the color of rubber and ash, this jungle, from the many years without sun. It was the color of stones and white cheeses and ink, and it was the color of the moon.

The children lay out, laughing, on the jungle mattress, and heard it sigh and squeak under them, resilient and alive. They ran among the trees, they slipped and fell, they pushed each other, they played hide-and-seek and tag, but most of all they squinted at the sun until the tears ran down their faces, they put their hands up to that yellowness and that amazing blueness and they breathed of the fresh, fresh air and listened and listened to the silence which suspended them in a blessed sea of no sound and no motion. They looked at everything and savored everything. Then, wildly, like animals escaped from their caves, they ran and ran in shouting circles. They ran for an hour and did not stop running.

And then—

In the midst of their running one of the girls wailed. Everyone stopped. The girl, standing in the open, held out her hand.

"Oh, look, look," she said trembling.

They came slowly to look at her opened palm. In the center of it, cupped and huge, was a single raindrop. She began to cry; looking at it. They glanced quietly at the sky. "Oh. Oh."

A few cold drops fell on their noses and their cheeks and their mouths. The sun faded behind a stir of mist. A wind blew cool around them. They turned and started to walk back toward the underground house, their hands at their sides, their smiles vanishing away.

A boom of thunder startled them and like leaves before a new hurricane, they tumbled upon each other and ran. Lightning struck ten miles away, five miles away, a mile, a half mile. The sky darkened into midnight in a flash.

They stood in the doorway of the underground for a moment until it was raining hard. Then they closed the door and heard the gigantic sound of the rain falling in tons and avalanches, everywhere and forever.

"Will it be seven more years?" "Yes. Seven."

Then one of them gave a little cry. "Margot!"

"What?"

"She's still in the closet where we locked her." "Margot."

They stood as if someone had driven them, like so many stakes, into the floor. They looked at each other and then looked away: They glanced out at the world that was raining now and raining and raining steadily. They could not meet each other's glances. Their faces were solemn and pale. They looked at their hands and feet, their faces down.

"Margot."

One of the girls said, "Well. . . ?" No one moved.

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"Go on," whispered the girl.

They walked slowly down the hall in the sound of cold rain. They turned through the doorway to the room in the sound of the storm and thunder, lightning on their faces, blue and terrible. They walked over to the closet door slowly and stood by it.

Behind the closet door was only silence.

They unlocked the door, even more slowly, and let Margot out.

### **Units 6-13: "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street"**

*An excerpt from the play by Rod Serling*

#### **Residents of Maple Street**

STEVE BRAND

DON MARTIN

WOMAN

CHARLIE FARNSWORTH

TOMMY

SALLY, TOMMY'S MOTHER

LES GOODMAN

MAN ONE

PETE VAN HORN

Prologue:

A peaceful late-summer evening on Maple Street, U.S.A., is interrupted by the sound of a roar and the flash of a light. It is precisely 6:43 P.M. At first, some of the neighbors think a meteor caused the roar and the flash of light. There's a power failure. Phones and portable radios stop working. Cars won't start. Neighbors gather to try to understand what has happened. Pete Van Horn volunteers to walk over to Floral Street to see if the power is still on there.

STEVE. I don't understand it. It was working fine before . . .

DON. Out of gas?

STEVE. [Shakes his head] I just had it filled.

WOMAN. What's it mean?

CHARLIE. It's just as if . . . as if everything had stopped. [Then he turns toward STEVE.] We'd better walk downtown. [Another murmur of assent at this.]

STEVE. The two of us can go, Charlie. [He turns to look back at the car.] It couldn't be the meteor. A meteor couldn't do this.

[He and CHARLIE exchange a look, then they start to walk away from the group. We see TOMMY, a serious-faced fourteen-year-old in spectacles who stands a few feet away from the group. He is halfway between them and the two men, who start to walk down the sidewalk.]

TOMMY. Mr. Brand . . . you better not!

STEVE. Why not?

TOMMY. They don't want you to.

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[STEVE and CHARLIE exchange a grin, and STEVE looks back toward the boy.]

STEVE. Who doesn't want us to?

TOMMY. [Jerks his head in the general direction of the distant horizon] Them!

STEVE. Them?

CHARLIE. Who are them?

TOMMY. [Very intently] Whoever was in that thing that came by overhead.

[STEVE knits his brows for a moment, cocking his head questioningly. His voice is intense.]

STEVE. What?

TOMMY. Whoever was in that thing that came over. I don't think they want us to leave here.

[STEVE leaves CHARLIE and walks over to the boy. He kneels down in front of him. He forces his voice to remain gentle. He reaches out and holds the boy.]

STEVE. What do you mean? What are you talking about?

TOMMY. They don't want us to leave. That's why they shut everything off.

STEVE. What makes you say that? Whatever gave you that idea?

WOMAN. [From the crowd] Now isn't that the craziest thing you ever heard?

TOMMY. [Persistently but a little intimidated by the crowd] It's always that way, in every story I ever read about a ship landing from outer space.

WOMAN. [To the boy's mother, SALLY, who stands on the fringe of the crowd] From outer space, yet! Sally, you better get that boy of yours up to bed. He's been reading too many comic books or seeing too many movies or something.

SALLY. Tommy, come over here and stop that kind of talk.

STEVE. Go ahead, Tommy. We'll be right back. And you'll see. That wasn't any ship or anything like it. That was just a . . . a meteor or something. Likely as not— [He turns to the group, now trying to weight his words with an optimism he obviously doesn't feel but is desperately trying to instill in himself as well as the others.] No doubt it did have something to do with all this power failure and the rest of it. Meteors can do some crazy things. Like sunspots.

DON. [Picking up the cue] Sure. That's the kind of thing—like sunspots. They raise Cain with radio reception all over the world. And this thing being so close—why, there's no telling the sort of stuff it can do. [He wets his lips, smiles nervously.] Go ahead, Charlie. You and Steve go into town and see if that isn't what's causing it all.

[STEVE and CHARLIE again walk away from the group down the sidewalk. The people watch silently. TOMMY stares at them, biting his lips, and finally calling out again.]

TOMMY. Mr. Brand!

[The two men stop. TOMMY takes a step toward them.]

TOMMY. Mr. Brand . . . please don't leave here.

[STEVE and CHARLIE stop once again and turn toward the boy. There's a murmur in the crowd, a murmur of irritation and concern as if the boy were bringing up fears that shouldn't be brought up: words which carried with them a strange kind of validity that came without logic but nonetheless registered and had meaning and effect.

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Again we hear a murmur of reaction from the crowd. TOMMY is partly frightened and partly defiant as well.]

TOMMY. You might not even be able to get to town. It was that way in the story. Nobody could leave. Nobody except—

STEVE. Except who?

TOMMY. Except the people they'd sent down ahead of them. They looked just like humans. And it wasn't until the ship landed that—

[The boy suddenly stops again, conscious of the parents staring at them and of the sudden hush of the crowd.]

SALLY. [In a whisper, sensing the antagonism of the crowd] Tommy, please son . . . honey, don't talk that way—

MAN ONE. That kid shouldn't talk that way . . . and we shouldn't stand here listening to him. Why this is the craziest thing I ever heard of. The kid tells us a comic book plot and here we stand listening—

[STEVE walks toward the camera, stops by the boy.]

STEVE. Go ahead, Tommy. What kind of story was this? What about the people that they sent out ahead?

TOMMY. That was the way they prepared things for the landing. They sent four people. A mother and a father and two kids who looked just like humans . . . but they weren't.

[There's another silence as STEVE looks toward the crowd and then toward TOMMY. He wears a tight grin.]

STEVE. Well, I guess what we'd better do then is to run a check on the neighborhood and see which ones of us are really human.

[There's laughter at this, but it's a laughter that comes from a desperate attempt to lighten the atmosphere. It's a release kind of laugh. The people look at one another in the middle of their laughter.]

CHARLIE. There must be somethin' better to do than stand around makin' bum jokes about it. [Rubs his jaw nervously] I wonder if Floral Street's got the same deal we got. [He looks past the houses] Where is Pete Van Horn anyway? Didn't he get back yet?

[Suddenly there's the sound of a car's engine starting to turn over. We look across the street toward the driveway of LES GOODMAN's house. He's at the wheel trying to start the car.]

SALLY. Can you get it started, Les? [He gets out of the car, shaking his head.]

GOODMAN. No dice.

[He walks toward the group. He stops suddenly as behind him, inexplicably and with a noise that inserts itself into the silence, the car engine starts up all by itself. GOODMAN whirls around to stare toward it. The car idles roughly, smoke coming from the exhaust, the frame shaking gently. GOODMAN's eyes go wide, and he runs over to his car. The people stare toward the car.]

MAN ONE. He got the car started somehow. He got his car started!

[The camera pans along the faces of the people as they stare, somehow caught up by this revelation and somehow, illogically, wildly, frightened.]

WOMAN. How come his car just up and started like that?

SALLY. All by itself. He wasn't anywheres near it. It started all by itself.

[DON MARTIN approaches the group, stops a few feet away to look toward GOODMAN's car and then back toward the group.]

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DON. And he never did come out to look at that thing that flew overhead. He wasn't even interested. [He turns to the faces in the group, his face taut and serious.] Why? Why didn't he come out with the rest of us to look?

CHARLIE. He always was an oddball. Him and his whole family. Real oddball.

DON. What do you say we ask him?

[The group suddenly starts toward the house. In this brief fraction of a moment they take the first step toward a metamorphosis that changes people from a group into a mob. They begin to head purposefully across the street toward the house at the end. STEVE stands in front of them. For a moment their fear almost turns their walk into a wild stampede, but STEVE's voice, loud, incisive, and commanding, makes them stop.]

STEVE. Wait a minute . . . wait a minute! Let's not be a mob!

## LEVEL 16 | SKILL CHECK

### Skill Check: Saturday Stories

It was seven o'clock as usual and the same four individuals—as it was every evening—were seated around the oblong table: Aaron, Stephanie, and their parents. Yet today, dinner felt entirely different: you could almost hear every chew and every sip. Everyone was thinking the same thing: Things were going to be different starting tomorrow.

Their father finally cleared his throat and said, "Let me go get the dessert and we can celebrate Aaron. It is, after all, his last dinner with us before he leaves for his university tomorrow."

Their mother added, "Yes, let's celebrate!"

Hard as she tried, Stephanie couldn't enjoy dinner that particular evening: she was overcome with ambivalence. Stephanie knew she should be overjoyed for her older brother and was certainly proud of him; he would be the first person in their family to attend a university and she witnessed first hand his hard work and determination. But the mere thought of Aaron moving across the country was not easy for Stephanie to stomach. Though they fought at times, quarreling over whose turn it was to wash the dishes or all the items that were borrowed but never returned, Aaron would still walk her to school everyday, cheer her on at gymnastics competitions, and help her with convoluted algebra problems that he had encountered in school several years before. And every Saturday morning, whether it was in the sweltering heat or torrential rain, Aaron took Stephanie to the nearby library. Stephanie adored that library; it had these idyllic pastel blue walls and the books were arranged by shade, forming a vibrant rainbow that wrapped around the entire library. The bookcases were so tall that you needed to climb a ladder to fetch a book from the top shelves! She would select a spot and read until Aaron could convince her that it was time they returned home.

"What will I do now on Saturday mornings?" Stephanie asked Aaron the following morning, swiping away some tears that were already welling up in the corners of her brown eyes.

Aaron said, "How about you spend that time on a special project instead? Think about something you enjoy. Something that you could spend hours doing without even knowing how much time has passed you by," Aaron remarked. "When I visit in December, you can show me your progress."

Aaron departed that morning with boxes of his belongings, and Stephanie pondered on ideas for her project. "What do I enjoy doing? What could I spend hours doing?" she muttered to herself. She rattled off all the things she did in the week. "Doing homework...going to gymnastics...reading at the library—"

It came to her right then, and Stephanie dashed over to her computer.

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"What are you doing?" Her mother asked, exchanging a quizzical expression with her father.

"I'm going to write a book! I've read so many stories, and now I have a great one to tell!"

And so, Stephanie spent every Saturday morning writing and Aaron had been absolutely right; she never paid any attention to the clock. At the dinner table, she would share her progress with her parents and they would take turns passing the story around, reading aloud different sections, and trying to guess what happens next. It soon became their new tradition on Saturday evenings that they looked forward to immensely.

Before long, December arrived and Aaron was walking through the front door again. "How's the special project going?" he inquired.

Proudly, Stephanie announced, "I wrote a book."

"I knew it!" Aaron chuckled. "What's it about?"

"You'll see," Stephanie replied and handed Aaron the finished story, which was a heavyset stack of paper bound together with the words "Saturday Stories" stamped across the title page.

### **Skill Check: A Winning Day**

As his mother turned the keys in the ignition and their car started to drive away, Tristan peered out the window at the sight of their Colorado home becoming smaller and smaller. This wasn't the first time they had to relocate—they were a military family—but no matter how many times they packed up their belongings in cardboard boxes, the inevitable goodbyes never became any easier.

"New Mexico, here we come!" Tristan's mother exclaimed.

While his mother fiddled with the radio, Tristan took another glance out the window; their old home was nowhere to be seen and already the towering Rocky Mountains looked smaller than ever. Not wanting to dwell on everything he would miss about Colorado, Tristan nestled his head against the seatbelt strap and dozed off to sleep.

Hours later, he awoke when the car rattled over a pothole. His gaze went to the window once more, and he was flabbergasted by what he saw. Gone were the snow-capped peaks of Colorado and, in their place, humongous red rock formations cast shadows across the highway. Tristan glimpsed upwards at the strikingly blue sky and outwards at the unfamiliar land before him.

"Welcome to New Mexico," his mother announced chipperly.

That first weekend was a whirlwind, mostly consisting of unpacking boxes and setting up the house, and before Tristan knew it, Monday morning had arrived: his first day at the new school.

He walked down the bustling hallway to his first class; this was the fifth school he had attended, and this walk felt all too familiar. I hope this time around is different, Tristan thought to himself. He reached for the door to the classroom with trepidation.

"E-gaming club?" An amicable voice asked.

"Sorry, what?" Tristan pivoted back around. The voice came from someone behind him—a girl with her hand outstretched and offering a pamphlet.

"The e-gaming club. If you're interested, come through the library during lunch. I'm Dominique," she elaborated. Tristan nodded, taking the paper, and Dominique proceeded to distribute pamphlets.

His morning classes went smoothly, and when lunch finally arrived, Tristan headed to the library. But when he entered through the doors, it hardly resembled a library inside. It was buzzing with vibrant noise and activity

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in every corner; club members were rearranging tables into long rows, plugging in computers, calibrating microphones, and positioning webcams.

"Neat, huh?" Dominique came over to greet him. "Today is our first competition."

"So you play video games against other schools?"

"Exactly. We have commentators just like sports games and a big monitor for spectators." Dominique turned and inquired, "Want to play?"

"Sure!" Tristan followed Dominique to a computer.

Tristan had never played a game like this before, and he was overwhelmed by having to remember the functions of the several different buttons. The game started and Tristan found himself navigating his simulated character through an intricate maze, which led to a fortified castle, and then searching for a chest of artifacts. He fumbled with the buttons a few times, and even made a few mistakes, but he was having fun and could hear Dominique encouraging him over his shoulder.

Tristan ended up losing the game, and he and Dominique walked over to join the other club members in the spectating area. Dominique began introducing him to some people, and Tristan tried to remember the names of all these new faces.

"Hey, we're about to grab lunch in the cafeteria," one person said after shaking hands with Tristan. "Would you like to join us?"

Tristan beamed. "Sure!"

I think this time around might actually be different, he thought to himself.

### **Skill Check: Empress of Ethiopia**

Born in Debre Tabor, Ethiopia in 1840 and ruling from 1889 to 1913, Taytu Betul is most famously known as the Empress of Ethiopia. Like any period of leadership, her reign was not perfect, but through decades of oral stories passed down from generation to generation and the preservation of other first hand sources, Taytu is remembered as one of the most unique and notable leaders in history.

#### **An Exceptional Scholar**

She was extremely intelligent and used her vast knowledge of many subjects to persevere in life and in politics. Taytu advocated that Ethiopia's culture was its immeasurable strength, but she also understood the need to learn as much as she could about other cultures around the world. Her scholarly accomplishments were exceptional: she was literate in Amharic as well as Ge'ez—the language of centuries-old sacred texts. In addition, Taytu composed poetry, played chess, and performed on the begenna, a 10-string instrument similar to a harp. She also taught diplomacy, politics, and economics to others.

#### **Fierce Defender**

Taytu was renowned for defending Ethiopia against European colonialism. Countries like Italy, for example, tried to invade Ethiopia. This conflict became known as the Italo-Ethiopian War. At the time, most of Europe believed this war should have been a relatively easy victory for Italy. European armies had historically overpowered African armies. Taytu, however, proved otherwise and stunned Europe with a win. In fact, Taytu's instrumental efforts contributed to Ethiopia remaining one of only two African countries to never be under European colonialism.

She was the clever mastermind behind the historic plan that led to an Ethiopian victory at an Italian-built fort in Mekelle. She instructed her soldiers to thwart the Italian army by cutting off their water supply, so they would have no choice but to surrender. Just as Taytu had shrewdly calculated, the Italian army surrendered within the next

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10 days. Later on, her presence was crucial in the Ethiopian victory at Adwa, the most significant victory of any African army during the height of European colonialism. During the battle, Taytu told over ten thousand women to fill jugs of water to assist the weary soldiers. When she witnessed her soldiers becoming disheartened during battle, she dismounted her horse, now eye-level with the soldiers, and encouraged them to press on with courage and determination. And if any soldiers were wounded during battle, Taytu aided them herself. Italy was ultimately defeated at the Battle of Adwa; Taytu had successfully preserved the morale of her soldiers and the borders of her country. This huge win at Adwa would go on to be identified by historians as one of the most noteworthy victories of any African country during colonialism.

While some leaders may cower and attempt to shield themselves from harm in precarious situations, Taytu showed no signs of visible fear when she rode out in front of her army on the battlefield. She was also the last empress to do so. Consequently, she earned the reputation of a fearsome warrior-queen.

#### A New Capital

Taytu's success did not just lie on the battlefield; she actively sought to strengthen and improve life in Ethiopia even in times of peace. One of Taytu's most celebrated accomplishments was founding a new Ethiopian capital in 1886. She selected the exact geographical location herself. The new capital quickly became a hub for political and economic activity in the country, which attracted more businesses and talent to the area. There, Taytu constructed Entoto Maryam Church where she orchestrated a way for children who were without homes to be educated by the church officials. She even paved the way for many of these children to work in highly respectable positions in the government.

Taytu named the new capital Addis Ababa, meaning "new flower" in Amharic. It remains Ethiopia's capital city to this very day.

#### Innovation Advancements

Taytu also contributed to modern advancements in the country. She helped establish a national bank to finance new projects and gradually paved the way for Ethiopia to have greater access to trade and technology. She facilitated the building of roads and bridges to connect the new capital with other parts of the country. She helped create a national currency, postal system, and railway system. By the 20th century, Ethiopia had telegraph and telephone lines throughout its territory.

#### Lasting Legacy

Without a doubt, Taytu exercised tremendous power and influence after her ascension to the throne. She secured control through remarkable bravery, intellect, and willingness to serve her country. She was further able to maintain her power by growing and maintaining her own personal army. Today, she continues to be celebrated in Ethiopia as a phenomenal leader and revolutionary warrior.