

Reading Comprehension Second Grade

Understanding the elements of a story can be tough. Give your child a headstart on reading comprehension with second grade worksheets that work on the main idea, cause and effect and more comprehension skills.

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Thor in the Land of the Giants

One day in the spring, Thor, the god of thunder, turned to Loki and said, "I'm getting bored. There is nothing for me to do this time of year. All I do is sit around. I need to exercise my strength! Say, what do you say we hold a contest of strength?"

Loki rolled his eyes. "That's not a fair fight. You may have the brawn, but I have the brains, and that's worth much more. I'd beat you in any contest of wits, no problem."

"Not so!" cried Thor. "Brawn always beats brain—why, all muscles need are exercise. What do you say we go to the Land of Giants to settle this matter?"

"OK, but you'll be sorry."

The two set out on their journey. When they arrived at Utgard, they found the gates locked. Thor tried to wrench them open, but he wasn't strong enough. He tried to smash them open with his hammer, but still nothing.

"Wait," said Loki. "Maybe we can squeeze through the openings between the bars."

That was just the thing. They were able to wriggle themselves through the bars, much to Thor's dismay. Brains had beaten brawn!

As they entered the great hall, the giants looked down at them and scoffed. "Is this really the famous Thor?" one said. "He is no bigger than a mouse!"

"How dare you!" spat Thor. "I am a mighty god!"

"Prove it," said the chief. "If you wish to stay here, you must show us how strong you really are."

In the back, Loki felt his stomach begin to rumble. The journey had taken two days, and he hadn't had anything to eat since he left Asgard.

"Oh, why did I wait so long to eat? I'm so hungry I could eat more than any of these giants could in one sitting!" he cried out loud. The chief then knew what kind of competition to have. He called the healthiest eater he knew to compete with Loki. A table was piled high with meats, cheeses, and breads and the two got to eating.

Now, Loki was thin, but he could eat more than anyone in Asgard. Even though he hadn't eaten for two days, he and the giant dropped out at the same time.

"That's time," said the chief. "Let's see who won." While both Loki and the giant had stopped at the same time, Loki had left the bones from the meat on his table. The giant had eaten his! The giant won.

Next, the chief called Thor to compete. "This won't do," said Thor. "I am a man of muscle. In order for it to be a fair competition, I'll need to be tested by my strength."



Captain Stormalong

Tall tales don't always tell the truth! See if you can separate fact from fiction: read the tall tale of Captain Stormalong below, then list parts of the story that could be true and the parts that probably aren't in the chart on the right.

Captain Alfred Bulltop Stormalong was one of the greatest sailors in the world, and perhaps the largest too. He was born in Massachusetts. As a boy he was a bit different than other boys his age. He was already 2 fathoms--or 12 feet--tall! Some people say he grew up to be more than 30 feet tall. Captain Stormalong's ship was named the Courser, and was so wide that it couldn't even fit in the Boston Harbor. Its mast was so tall that it scraped the moon, and its keel was so deep that it scraped the ocean floor.



Captain Stormalong was famous for many things. But perhaps his most famous story was how he defeated the kraken--a giant sea creature! The enormous kraken was half octopus and half sea snake, and could crush a ship with just one swipe of its tentacles. The first time they battled, Stormalong jumped out of his ship, creating a tidal wave that went all the way to China.



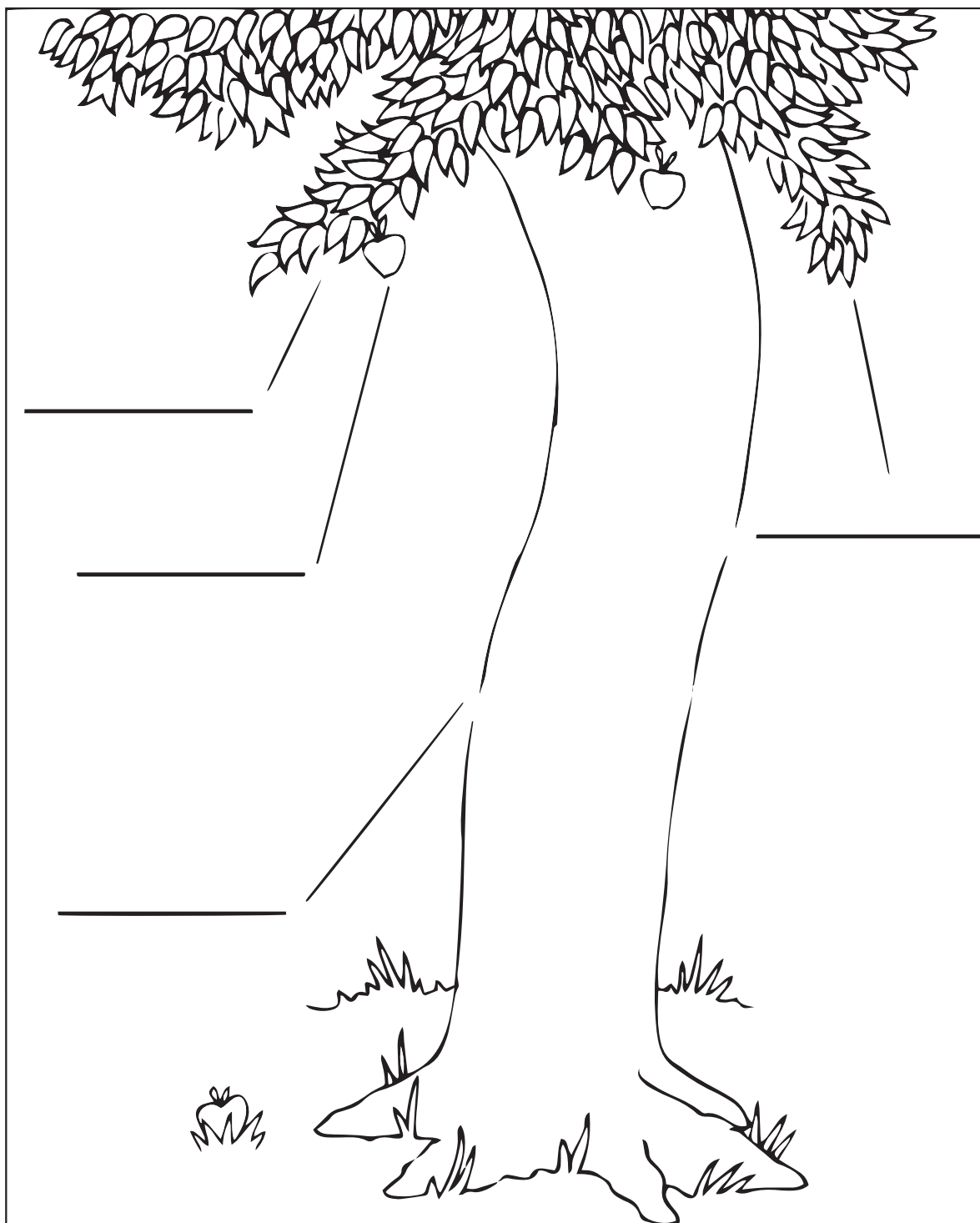
He swam to the bottom of the sea to face the kraken, but it was too fast and got away. So the next time, Stormalong was ready with a lasso, and looped a giant rope around the kraken's neck, just like the cowboys do. The angry kraken swam and swam, towing the ship behind it, when suddenly it swam into a mighty whirlpool. The kraken and the ship went 'round and 'round until finally Stormalong let go of the rope. His ship was flung through the air and safely back onto the water, while the kraken went down in the whirlpool, never to be seen again.

True

Make-Believe

THE GIVING TREE

Directions: After reading *The Giving Tree*, see if you can remember all of the parts of the tree that the boy enjoyed. Label these parts on the spaces provided. Then, color the tree.



[illegible]

Asgard, the home of the gods, was a magical place, full of riches and beauty. However, it was unprotected: it just sat there, glittering in the clouds, enticing all who passed by.

As time went on, the gods became concerned for the safety of their families and their homes. One day, a stranger came by on horseback. He approached Odin, the father of all gods, and offered to build a great wall to keep Asgard protected.

“That’s a fantastic idea!” said Odin. “It’s just what we need. Name your price, and we shall pay it.”

Now, these were gods, and the man knew that gods were capable of conjuring up any prize he could dream of. He thought and thought about what he might want in exchange. Then, he had it.

“All I ask is for the sun, the moon, and the beautiful goddess Freyja to be my wife.”

Odin and the gods were shocked. They could easily arrange to give this man the sun and the moon, but they were disgusted that he would ask for their friend and fellow god Freyja as his reward. They were just about to turn him away when Loki, Asgard's most famous trickster, stepped forward.

“An excellent idea!” he said excitedly. “If you can finish the wall in six months, you’ve got a deal.” He shook the man’s hand.

The gods looked at Loki in horror. “What did you do?” they said.

“Don’t worry about it,” he said with a twinkle in his eye. “There’s no way he can build an entire wall around Asgard in six months. Freyja will be fine, and we’ll have half a wall done for free.”

The stranger returned the next day and began to build. He worked almost nonstop, day and night, in all kinds of weather. Five and a half months later, it became clear that the man, against all odds, was on track to finish the wall.



“What do we do?” cried the gods. “We can’t let him marry Freyja against her will! What were you thinking, Loki?”

Realizing his plan had backfired, he thought and thought. Then, he had an idea.

Loki could change form, so that night, he transformed himself into a lovely mare* to distract the stranger's horse. As he had planned, the builder's horse was so entranced by Loki's new form that he ran right up to it. Quickly, Loki ran towards the woods. The horse followed, until Loki was able to run far enough ahead of it to hide, and the horse became lost. When he could no longer see the horse trailing behind him, he changed back into his usual self and made his way back toward the builder's house.

As he was passing by, the builder came home. “Loki, what are you doing here? And where is my horse?”



Day of the Dead



DIRECTIONS: Read the passage about Day of the Dead.
Then answer the questions that follow.



Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) is a Mexican holiday. It is celebrated in Mexico and all around the world. People celebrate after Halloween on November 1st (All Saints' Day) and November 2nd (All Souls' Day). The holiday brings family and friends together to pray for and remember loved ones who have died.

For Day of the Dead, people decorate their homes and home altars with sugar skulls, marigolds, candles, incense, and pictures of the dead. They leave offerings of food and treats for the spirits. They visit and care for the graves of their dead relatives and ancestors. Day of the Dead is a joyful celebration.

Questions

1. When is Day of the Dead celebrated?

- a. winter
- b. spring
- c. summer
- d. fall

2. In Spanish, Day of the Dead translates to:

- a. Día de las Noches
- b. Día de Difuntos
- c. Días Oscuros
- d. Día de los Muertos

3. What adjective describes Day of the Dead?

- a. sorrowful
- b. joyful
- c. frightening
- d. boring

4. What item is NOT placed on altars?

- a. food
- b. marigolds
- c. money
- d. incense

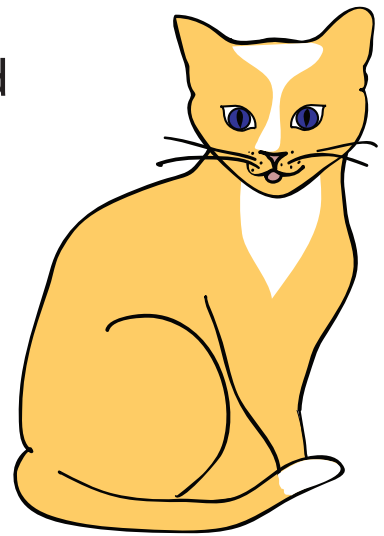


Draw a picture of someone you would like to remember on Day of the Dead this year.

Find The Main Idea

The **main idea** is the most important idea in a paragraph. Sometimes, the main idea is the first sentence. Sometimes the main idea is in the middle or at the end. Read the paragraphs carefully. Circle the main idea.

Kittens need special care. You have to feed kittens twice a day. They have a lot of energy. You need to play with them often. Kittens will chew on almost anything they find. You have to watch them closely.



What is the main idea?

1. Kittens will chew on almost anything.
2. Kittens need special care.

The puppy began to eat, but then he stopped. He yawned and stretched. He chased his tail. He rolled over and barked. He licked his paw. Finally, he went back to his dish and finished eating.



What is the main idea?

1. The puppy likes to eat.
2. The puppy takes a long time to eat.

Women



History



*Statue of
Sacagawea with
her son*



*Statue of
Sacagawea with
Lewis and Clark*

Sacagawea

Sacagawea was born about 1788. She was a member of the Shoshone tribe of Native Americans in Idaho.

When she was young, Sacagawea was kidnapped by a war party of Hidatsa Indians who were enemies of her people. While she was captive in South Dakota, a fur trader named Toussaint Charbonneau took Sacagawea as his wife.

In the winter of 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition came to the area where Sacagawea and her husband lived. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was a group of American explorers, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. They had been sent by President Jefferson to explore the large western lands. The U.S. had bought the land in 1803 from the French. The land, called the Louisiana Purchase, contained parts of 15 states, including Louisiana, Missouri and Montana.

Lewis and Clark hired Toussaint as a guide for their journey. Sacagawea went also, because she could speak the Shoshone language. Beginning in 1805, the expedition went west to the Pacific Ocean, exploring the rivers and mountains and meeting the Native Americans who lived there.

They returned to North Dakota in August 1806. Many historians believe Sacagawea died there in 1812.

Sacagawea faced hardships to help Lewis and Clark explore the new lands. She is remembered for her courage and strength.



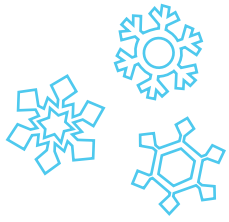
*Sacagawea exploring with
Lewis and Clark*

What year did Sacagawea start her journey with the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

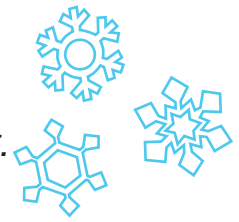
Q
AND
A

What was the large land purchase from France in 1803 called?

When Sacagawea was born, what tribe did she belong to?



Cause and Effect



A cause is why something happens. An effect is what happens.

Example: *Anna skipped breakfast, so she was hungry all morning.*

cause

effect

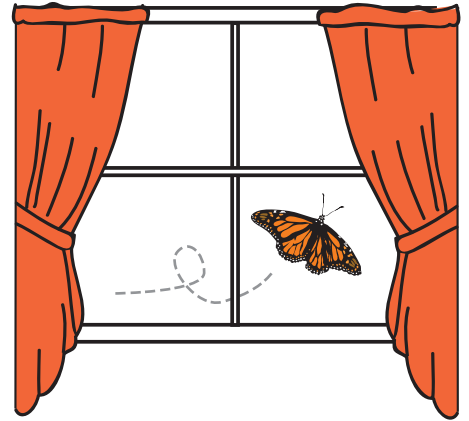
Circle the best effect for each cause.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Jim did not study... | so he made an A+ on the test.
so he did poorly on the test. |
| <hr/> | |
| 2. The soccer team practiced everyday... | and won the game.
and lost the game. |
| <hr/> | |
| 3. There was a blizzard outside... | so everyone went outside to play.
so school was cancelled. |
| <hr/> | |
| 4. Ava felt sick... | so Mom took her to the doctor.
so I gave her some ice cream. |
| <hr/> | |
| 5. The girl tripped... | and checked her messages.
and skinned her knees. |
| <hr/> | |
| 6. I ate too much candy... | and got a stomach ache.
and felt great. |
| <hr/> | |
| 7. The team won... | and the coach was sad.
and they celebrated with a party. |
| <hr/> | |
| 8. The baby cried... | so Dad held her.
and she made Dad cry. |
| <hr/> | |
| 9. Tony took good care of his dog... | and his dog was very happy.
and his dog ran away. |
| <hr/> | |
| 10. Mary's hands were dirty after painting... | so she washed them with soap and water.
so she sat down to eat dinner. |

What Happens Next?

Read the story. Decide what might happen next.

Adi's mom asks Adi not to open the window. If he does, bugs might fly into the house. It's very hot inside. Adi opens the window just a little. Then sees a butterfly flying toward the window.



Draw a picture of what you think will happen next.

Write what you think will happen next.

Name _____

Date _____

WOMEN IN HISTORY

Amelia Earhart

Amelia Earhart was born in Atchison, Kansas in 1897. She spent her childhood in Kansas, Minnesota, and Illinois. In 1920, she took her first airplane ride. She loved flying and began taking flying lessons. At that time, women pilots were very rare. When Amelia earned her pilot's license in 1923 she became the 16th woman in the U.S. to have her license to fly.



Amelia Earhart in front of the Lockheed Electra.

In 1928, Amelia was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. She flew with another pilot, Wilmer Stultz. Amelia became very famous for this flight. When she came back to America, she was honored with parades and met President Coolidge. In 1932, Amelia flew across the Atlantic again, this time by herself. She was the first woman to fly alone, or solo, across the Atlantic. For this, Amelia received the Distinguished Flying Cross from Congress, the first woman to receive this honor.

Amelia broke many records for distance and speed. She was the first person to do many things, such as fly from Hawaii to California.

In 1937, Amelia tried to break another record. This time, it was to fly around the world along the equator. She and her crew member, Fred Noonan, took off from Florida on June 1, 1937. They flew across the Atlantic, Africa, and India. When they reached the Pacific, they had radio trouble and were low on fuel. The plane disappeared on July 2, 1937 with Amelia and Fred on board. They were never found.

Amelia's life encouraged many other women to become pilots. She also educated the public about flying and airplanes.



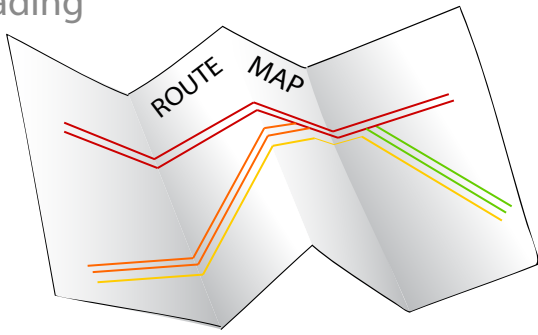
Amelia Earhart as a child.

Questions

1. What year did Amelia fly across the Atlantic alone?

2. What did Congress give Amelia?

3. What record did Amelia try to break in 1937?



A Wrong Turn

Complete the story by writing in the empty boxes below.

One sunny Saturday, Donovan decided to visit his cousin in a nearby town. "You're old enough now to take the train on your own," Donovan's mother told him. "Just be careful, and be sure to get off at Mountainview Station."



Donovan looked out the train window just as it pulled away from the station. He realized too late that he'd missed his stop! He glanced around and noticed a friendly-looking train conductor walking up the aisle.

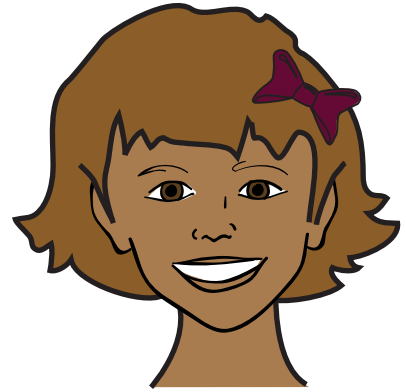


As Donovan stepped off the train at Mountainview Station, he breathed a sigh of relief. "Next time," he told himself, "I'll bring my own map!"

What's in a Story?

Read the story, then write the main idea in the middle box. Write one detail in each of the other boxes.

It's the first day of school! Ellie is very excited. She takes her new backpack and lunchbox to school. She is happy to see her friends in the classroom. The students like their teacher. Everyone has a good first day of school.



Detail:

Detail:

Main idea:

Detail:

Detail:

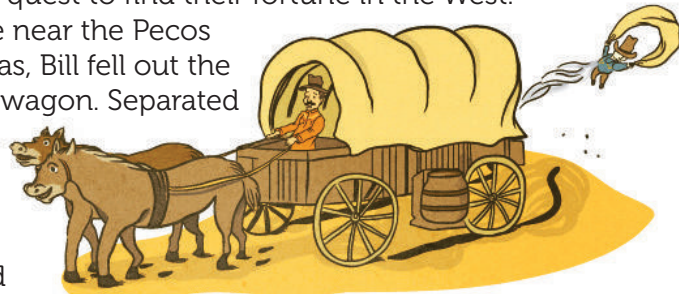




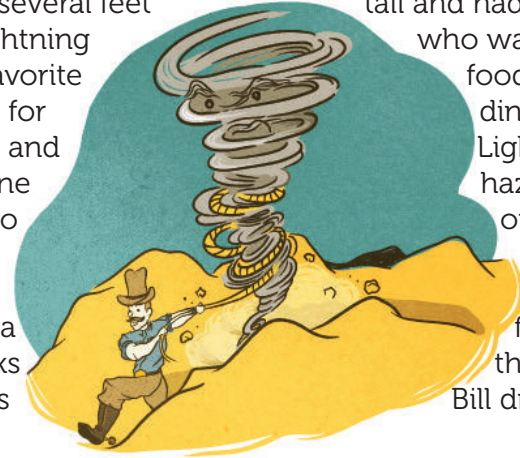
Pecos Bill

Tall tales don't always tell the truth! See if you can separate fact from fiction: read the tall tale of Pecos Bill below, then list parts of the story that could be true and the parts that probably aren't in the chart on the right.

It's said that when Pecos Bill was just a baby, he was traveling with family across the country in a covered wagon, the way many people did on their quest to find their fortune in the West. Somewhere near the Pecos River in Texas, Bill fell out the back of the wagon. Separated from his parents, he spent his childhood being raised by coyotes in the wilds of Texas.



When he grew older, he became an extraordinary man! He was several feet tall and had a horse named Lightning who was just as fantastic. Lightning's favorite food was dynamite, dinner every night! Together, Bill and Lightning tamed the hazy afternoon, he saw a tornado on the horizon. He grabbed his trusty lasso and wrangled it into submission – but it put up a fight first! The Grand Canyon marks the path the tornado took as Pecos Bill dragged it behind him.



True

Make-Believe

Old Bill had a woman named Slue Foot Sue, who was just as tall as him and ten times as pretty. He was determined to marry her, and one night, while trying to impress her, he shot out the stars, leaving only one for her to marvel at – the Lone Star of Texas.



Seal

The true scientific name for seal is “**pinniped**,” which is Latin for “fin-footed mammals.” Seals have sleek, barrel-shaped bodies that help them slip along ice or smooth rocks and swim quickly. They spend time both on the land and in the sea, but stay very close to the water’s edge while on land.

Seals without external ears are called true seals, or phocids. They prefer the water and cannot move very well on land. Phocids have more tail-like back flippers and more streamlined snouts, which help them swim in waving body motions. They also use their tails to communicate by slapping the water with their back flippers.

Eared seals (also called walking seals or otariids) have back flippers that can turn upside down and are shaped more like feet. They can get around better on land than earless seals, but are still faster in the water than they are walking. They swim with their front flippers. Sea lions and fur seals are two species of eared seals. They have snouts more like dogs and communicate in vocal “barks.” The California sea lion is usually the species used in circus tricks.

Pinnipeds live in both warm and cold climates near and in the ocean. In cold climates, a thick layer of blubber, or fat, under their skin helps keep them warm.

The more fat an animal has, the easier it is for it to float, so the blubber helps seals surface after diving in the water. Some seals also have fur to keep warm. When blood moves toward the outer part of an animal’s body, it lets heat off. Seals in cold climates have **circulatory systems** (the part of animals that blood flows through) that keep their blood more internal to avoid heat loss. Seals that live in warm climates do the opposite. They wave their flippers and go in the cooler water, which also helps bring their blood to the surface to release extra heat in their bodies.

Seals also have **adaptations**, specialized ways to live in their environment, that help them see well both on land and underwater. A clear membrane covers and protects their eyes while open underwater. Their nostrils also close on their own and they can hold their breath for almost two hours while diving underwater. Seals’ blood flow only goes to their sense organs and nervous system while they are underwater. This lets them feel less pain and fatigue than other animals while swimming. Once they resurface, seals need time to normalize their body functions. Seals hunt underwater for fish, shellfish, squid, penguins, and other small marine creatures. Orcas and sharks hunt seals as do polar bears in the arctic.

1. **New terms:** See how these three terms are used in the text, and write a definition next to each one.

pinniped

circulatory system

adaptations

2. How do phocids communicate? What about otariids? _____

3. Seals can run very fast.

True or False?

4. Seals have a membrane that covers their eyes when underwater.

True or False?

Paul Bunyan

Tall tales don't always tell the truth! See if you can separate fact from fiction: read the tall tale of Paul Bunyan below, then list parts of the story that could be true and the parts that probably aren't in the chart on the right.

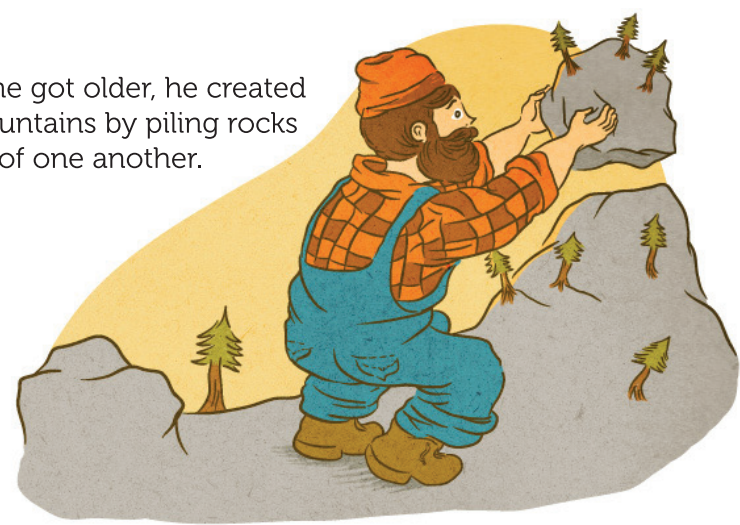
Paul Bunyan was a lumberjack who tamed the great American forests. He and his pet ox, Babe, traveled across the country, where he chopped down the tallest trees all by himself!



Legend says he was so big when he was born, it took five storks to carry him to his parents, and his first bed was a lumber wagon. After just a week of being born, he was able to fit in his father's clothing. When he was old enough to speak and laugh, the vibrations broke all the windows in the house, and scared the frogs and fish right out of nearby ponds!



When he got older, he created the mountains by piling rocks on top of one another.



His pet ox, Babe, was just as big. It's said that the Great Lakes started off as his foot-prints!



True

Make-Believe

Answer Sheets

Reading Comprehension Second Grade

Day of the Dead: History

Story Comprehension: What's the Main Idea?

Women in History: Sacagawea

Identifying Cause and Effect

Amelia Earhart Biography

Story Comprehension: What's in a Story?

Seal Facts



Day of the Dead



DIRECTIONS: Read the passage about Day of the Dead.
Then answer the questions that follow.



Day of the Dead (Día de los Muertos) is a Mexican holiday. It is celebrated in Mexico and all around the world. People celebrate after Halloween on November 1st (All Saints' Day) and November 2nd (All Souls' Day). The holiday brings family and friends together to pray for and remember loved ones who have died.

For Day of the Dead, people decorate their homes and home altars with sugar skulls, marigolds, candles, incense, and pictures of the dead. They leave offerings of food and treats for the spirits. They visit and care for the graves of their dead relatives and ancestors. Day of the Dead is a joyful celebration.

Questions

1. When is Day of the Dead celebrated?

- a. winter
- b. spring
- c. summer
- ☒ d. fall

2. In Spanish, Day of the Dead translates to:

- a. Día de las Noches
- b. Día de Difuntos
- c. Días Oscuros
- ☒ d. Día de los Muertos

3. What adjective describes Day of the Dead?

- a. sorrowful
- ☒ b. joyful
- c. frightening
- d. boring

4. What item is NOT placed on altars?

- a. food
- b. marigolds
- ☒ c. money
- d. incense

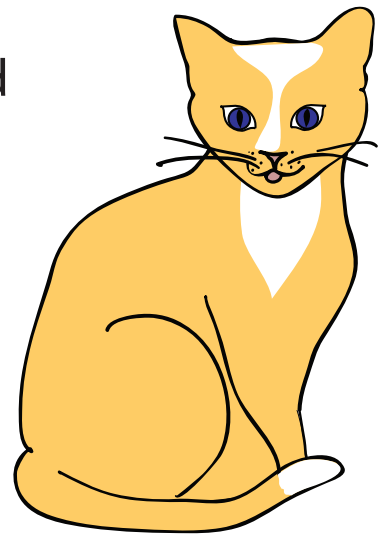


Draw a picture of someone you would like to remember on Day of the Dead this year.

Find The Main Idea

The main idea is the most important idea in a paragraph. Sometimes, the main idea is the first sentence. Sometimes the main idea is in the middle or at the end. Read the paragraphs carefully. Circle the main idea.

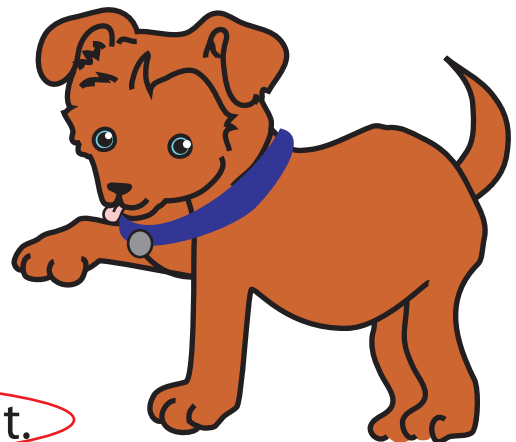
Kittens need special care. You have to feed kittens twice a day. They have a lot of energy. You need to play with them often. Kittens will chew on almost anything they find. You have to watch them closely.



What is the main idea?

1. Kittens will chew on almost anything.
2. Kittens need special care.

The puppy began to eat, but then he stopped. He yawned and stretched. He chased his tail. He rolled over and barked. He licked his paw. Finally, he went back to his dish and finished eating.



What is the main idea?

1. The puppy likes to eat.
2. The puppy takes a long time to eat.

Women



History



*Statue of
Sacagawea with
her son*



*Statue of
Sacagawea with
Lewis and Clark*

Sacagawea

Sacagawea was born about 1788. She was a member of the Shoshone tribe of Native Americans in Idaho.

When she was young, Sacagawea was kidnapped by a war party of Hidatsa Indians who were enemies of her people. While she was captive in South Dakota, a fur trader named Toussaint Charbonneau took Sacagawea as his wife.

In the winter of 1804, the Lewis and Clark Expedition came to the area where Sacagawea and her husband lived. The Lewis and Clark Expedition was a group of American explorers, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. They had been sent by President Jefferson to explore the large western lands. The U.S. had bought the land in 1803 from the French. The land, called the Louisiana Purchase, contained parts of 15 states, including Louisiana, Missouri and Montana.

Lewis and Clark hired Toussaint as a guide for their journey. Sacagawea went also, because she could speak the Shoshone language. Beginning in 1805, the expedition went west to the Pacific Ocean, exploring the rivers and mountains and meeting the Native Americans who lived there.

They returned to North Dakota in August 1806. Many historians believe Sacagawea died there in 1812.

Sacagawea faced hardships to help Lewis and Clark explore the new lands. She is remembered for her courage and strength.



*Sacagawea exploring with
Lewis and Clark*

What year did Sacagawea start her journey with the Lewis and Clark Expedition?

1805

What was the large land purchase from France in 1803 called?

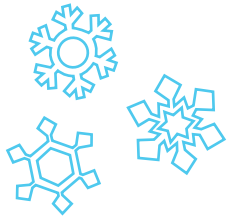
Louisiana Purchase

When Sacagawea was born, what tribe did she belong to?

Shoshone



Cause and Effect



A cause is why something happens. An effect is what happens.

Example: *Anna skipped breakfast, so she was hungry all morning.*

cause

effect

Circle the best effect for each cause.

1. Jim did not study...

so he made an A+ on the test.

so he did poorly on the test.

2. The soccer team practiced everyday...

and won the game.

and lost the game.

3. There was a blizzard outside...

so everyone went outside to play.

so school was cancelled.

4. Ava felt sick...

so Mom took her to the doctor.

so I gave her some ice cream.

5. The girl tripped...

and checked her messages.

and skinned her knees.

6. I ate too much candy...

and got a stomach ache.

and felt great.

7. The team won...

and the coach was sad.

and they celebrated with a party.

8. The baby cried...

so Dad held her.

and she made Dad cry.

9. Tony took good care of his dog...

and his dog was very happy.

and his dog ran away.

10. Mary's hands were dirty after painting...

so she washed them with soap and water.

so she sat down to eat dinner.

WOMEN IN HISTORY**Amelia Earhart**

Amelia Earhart was born in Atchison, Kansas in 1897. She spent her childhood in Kansas, Minnesota, and Illinois. In 1920, she took her first airplane ride. She loved flying and began taking flying lessons. At that time, women pilots were very rare. When Amelia earned her pilot's license in 1923 she became the 16th woman in the U.S. to have her license to fly.



Amelia Earhart in front of the Lockheed Electra.

In 1928, Amelia was the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. She flew with another pilot, Wilmer Stultz. Amelia became very famous for this flight. When she came back to America, she was honored with parades and met President Coolidge. In 1932, Amelia flew across the Atlantic again, this time by herself. She was the first woman to fly alone, or solo, across the Atlantic. For this, Amelia received the Distinguished Flying Cross from Congress, the first woman to receive this honor.

Amelia broke many records for distance and speed. She was the first person to do many things, such as fly from Hawaii to California.

In 1937, Amelia tried to break another record. This time, it was to fly around the world along the equator. She and her crew member, Fred Noonan, took off from Florida on June 1, 1937. They flew across the Atlantic, Africa, and India. When they reached the Pacific, they had radio trouble and were low on fuel. The plane disappeared on July 2, 1937 with Amelia and Fred on board. They were never found.

Amelia's life encouraged many other women to become pilots. She also educated the public about flying and airplanes.



Amelia Earhart as a child.

Questions

1. What year did Amelia fly across the Atlantic alone?

1932

2. What did Congress give Amelia?

The Distinguished Flying Cross

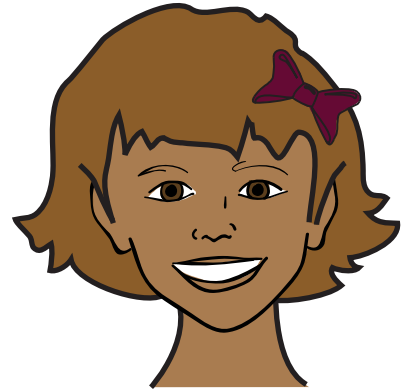
3. What record did Amelia try to break in 1937?

Flying around the world along the equator

What's in a Story?

Read the story, then write the main idea in the middle box. Write one detail in each of the other boxes.

It's the first day of school! Ellie is very excited. She takes her new backpack and lunchbox to school. She is happy to see her friends in the classroom. The students like their teacher. Everyone has a good first day of school.



Detail: She takes her new backpack to school.

Detail: She is happy to see her friends in the classroom.

Main idea:

Ellie is excited about the first day of school.

Detail: The students like their teacher.

Detail: Everyone has a good first day of school.



Seal

The true scientific name for seal is “**pinniped**,” which is Latin for “fin-footed mammals.” Seals have sleek, barrel-shaped bodies that help them slip along ice or smooth rocks and swim quickly. They spend time both on the land and in the sea, but stay very close to the water’s edge while on land.

Seals without external ears are called true seals, or phocids. They prefer the water and cannot move very well on land. Phocids have more tail-like back flippers and more streamlined snouts, which help them swim in waving body motions. They also use their tails to communicate by slapping the water with their back flippers.

Eared seals (also called walking seals or otariids) have back flippers that can turn upside down and are shaped more like feet. They can get around better on land than earless seals, but are still faster in the water than they are walking. They swim with their front flippers. Sea lions and fur seals are two species of eared seals. They have snouts more like dogs and communicate in vocal “barks.” The California sea lion is usually the species used in circus tricks.

Pinnipeds live in both warm and cold climates near and in the ocean. In cold climates, a thick layer of blubber, or fat, under their skin helps keep them warm.

The more fat an animal has, the easier it is for it to float, so the blubber helps seals surface after diving in the water. Some seals also have fur to keep warm. When blood moves toward the outer part of an animal’s body, it lets heat off. Seals in cold climates have **circulatory systems** (the part of animals that blood flows through) that keep their blood more internal to avoid heat loss. Seals that live in warm climates do the opposite. They wave their flippers and go in the cooler water, which also helps bring their blood to the surface to release extra heat in their bodies.

Seals also have **adaptations**, specialized ways to live in their environment, that help them see well both on land and underwater. A clear membrane covers and protects their eyes while open underwater. Their nostrils also close on their own and they can hold their breath for almost two hours while diving underwater. Seals’ blood flow only goes to their sense organs and nervous system while they are underwater. This lets them feel less pain and fatigue than other animals while swimming. Once they resurface, seals need time to normalize their body functions. Seals hunt underwater for fish, shellfish, squid, penguins, and other small marine creatures. Orcas and sharks hunt seals as do polar bears in the arctic.

1. **New terms:** See how these three terms are used in the text, and write a definition next to each one.

pinniped the scientific term for seal

circulatory system the part of an animal that blood flows through

adaptations specialized ways something works to live in an environment

2. How do phocids communicate? What about otariids? phocids slap the water with their back flippers, otariids use vocal “barks”

3. Seals can run very fast.

True or **False?**

4. Seals have a membrane that covers their eyes when underwater.

True or False?