The Six-Minute Solution: 
A Reading Fluency Program 
(Intermediate Level)

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Sheron M. Brown, M.A., M.S.

Grades 3–6
We would like to express our appreciation to:

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Our mothers—Ruth Novelli and Joan Miscall—who first instilled in us a love of reading.

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Sheron M. Brown
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Nothing is more painful and frustrating to a teacher than to hear a student arduously read a sentence word by word, seeming to have to physically drag himself or herself to the end of the sentence. As educators, we have all heard students read in this manner time and again and have wanted to do something—anything—to help these disfluent students become good readers.

*Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* will help students do just that. This research-based, highly effective instructional procedure for students in grades 3–6 builds reading fluency in only six minutes of the instructional day. For an overview of the instructional format, see the table below.

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Struggling readers as well as good readers benefit from Six-Minute Solution Intermediate’s daily fluency practice. Struggling readers gain fluency first at the word level and then at the passage level, while competent readers are challenged to read more expressive texts that are increasingly more difficult and sophisticated. All students benefit from fluency practice because as they encounter more challenging texts, they need to continue to grow as fluent readers.

**Rereading to Build Fluency**

As the saying goes, “Practice makes perfect”—whether it’s shooting basketballs, playing the piano, or processing text in a smooth, efficient, and accurate manner. The benefits of repeated readings of the same passage to build reading fluency have been well documented in many research studies (Levy, Nicholls, & Kroshen, 1993; Meyer & Felton, 1999; Samuels, 1979). Six-Minute Solution Intermediate helps students succeed at reading fluency using an instructional model that is based on repeated-reading research and partnering students with closely matched instructional and fluency levels. Research supports the fact that students’ reading skills improve when they work with peers in structured reading activities (Greenwood, Delquadri, & Hall, 1989; Rosenshine & Meister, 1994; and Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Famish, 1987).

**Partnering Students to Build Fluency**

In Six-Minute Solution Intermediate, students’ current instructional reading levels are determined and then students are placed in fluency partnerships. In these partnerships, one student reads the passage to his/her partner for one minute while the partner tracks the words read correctly as well as the reading errors. Partners then switch roles, with each partner charting his/her own progress. The entire procedure takes only six minutes.

**Decoding & Fluency**

Experts may disagree as to what exactly is the best approach to teach students how to read, but they are in agreement as to what good reading “sounds” like. According to Carnine, Silbert, and Kame’enui (1997), fluency is “reading smoothly, easily, and quickly.” In order to read fluently, the reader must be able to decode the vast majority of words automatically, with approximately 95 percent accuracy. However, although there is a clear link between fluency and decoding skills, fluency practice alone will not improve a student’s
decoding skills. Any underlying decoding problems must also be addressed either prior to or in conjunction with fluency practice.

**Comprehension & Fluency**
Research also shows a high correlation between reading comprehension and reading fluency (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002; Foorman & Mehta, 2002; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974). Reading comprehension suffers when students lack fluency. If a student is focusing his/her cognitive energies on word decoding and recognition, those energies are not available for comprehension. In the words of Farstrup and Samuels (2002), fluency consists of “optical, perceptual, syntactic, and semantic cycles, each melting into the next as readers try to get meaning as efficiently as possible using minimal time and energy.”

**Independent Reading & Fluency**
Fluent readers generally find reading to be a pleasurable activity; as a result, they read more. When the amount of time spent on independent reading increases, there are accompanying gains in reading-related skills. As students read more, they increase not only their comprehension but also their vocabulary, background knowledge, decoding, and fluency skills. The “Matthew effect”—a term coined by reading researcher Dr. Keith Stanovich—refers to the effect that in reading, as in other areas of life, “the rich get richer while the poor get poorer” (Stanovich, 1986).

**Work Completion & Fluency**
Fluent readers will be better able to complete both class assignments and homework. This is significant when you consider the amount of reading assigned to upper elementary, middle school, and high school students. As an example: Student A, a fluent reader, is able to read an average of 180 correct words per minute (cwpm); Student B, a struggling reader, has an average fluency rate of 60 cwpm. Both students are assigned the same amount of reading. Student A, with an appropriate fluency rate, is able to complete the assignment in two hours. Student B, who reads at only one-third the rate of Student A, needs six hours to complete the same assignment.

**Reading Achievement & Fluency Practice**
Although the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Pinnell, Piluski, Wixson, Campbell, Gough, & Beatty, 1995) found that 44 percent of fourth graders were not fluent readers, research shows that educators have the knowledge and tools to affect this problem. After analyzing many fluency studies, the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) reported that fluency can be taught and that guided, repeated, oral reading procedures are “appropriate and valuable avenues for increasing reading fluency and overall reading achievement.” Skilled readers read words quickly, correctly, and without hesitation. Students who have not become fluent readers continue to plod slowly through each sentence without experiencing the joy of quick, automatic, fluent reading. By its very nature, fluency practice supports comprehension. It provides a skill-building activity that enables students to move quickly through text. As students build fluency through rereading, they amass a larger reading vocabulary. As they begin to read with automaticity, their cognitive
attention can be focused on the text’s meaning instead of on word identification. The National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000) found that repeated oral reading, accompanied by feedback and guidance, resulted in significant reading achievement.

_Six-Minute Solution Intermediate_ uses both of these research-validated components—repeated readings of the same passage and oral feedback from peers—to build fluency.

**Six Simple Steps for Getting Started**
The _Six-Minute Solution Intermediate_ partner fluency model can be easily implemented in a variety of settings. The following is a list of the steps needed to get started and an estimate of how long each step will take.

**Step 1. Assessment (Chapter 1)**

**Estimated Time 1-2 hours**
- Give each student a one minute timing on a grade level passage to determine oral fluency rate.
- Give each student a test to determine instructional reading level—San Diego Quick, silent reading test or a passage placement accuracy test.

**Step 2. Select Fluency Partners and Instructional Groups (Chapter 2)**

**Estimated Time 1 hour**
- Using a class roster, list students by fluency score and then by instructional reading level.
- Assign partners by ranking. For example, students ranked #1 and #2 would be partners and students ranked #3 and #4 would be partners. Partners must be closely matched (fluency rates should be within 10-15 words of each other).
- Designate the stronger of the two as partnership #1 and the other #2.

**Step 3. Introduce the Fluency Concept (Chapter 3)**

**Estimated Time 20-30 minutes**
- Teacher demonstrates whisper reading the sample passage, tracking while reading, underlining unknown words and marking the last word read when the timer sounds.
- Teacher demonstrates totaling correct number of words read and graphing.
- Students whisper read passage for one minute, figure out the number of correct words read and graph. Procedure is repeated for a second minute.
- Students compare number of cwpm on each of their timings. Teacher leads class discussion on the benefits of repeated reading.

**Step 4. Establish Partner Behavior (Chapter 4)**

**Estimated Time 10-20 minutes**
- Teacher models and discusses cooperative and respectful partnerships.
- Teacher selects a student partner to demonstrate correct partner behavior during reading—“lean in and whisper read.”
- Teacher demonstrates giving polite feedback to the partner.
• Teacher demonstrates gently correcting errors using tell and repeat method.
• Teacher states "No Arguing" rule and demonstrates how arguing wastes time.

Step 5. Train Students in the Partnership Model (Chapter 5)
Estimated Time 20-30 minutes
• Teacher demonstrates partner procedure with a student.
• Teacher sets timer for one minute and instructs all partner 1s to read and all partner 2s to follow along and underline errors.
• After the timer sounds, teacher instructs all partner 2s to give feedback to all partner 1s—total words read, number of errors, and correct words per minute.
• Teacher instructs all partner 1s to graph or record their score.
• Teacher instructs students to change roles and get ready for the second timing. Students repeat procedure for a second minute.
• Procedure is repeated. **Note:** Teacher should walk around the room and monitor carefully at all times.

Step 6. Train Students to Manage Materials (Chapter 6)
Estimated Time 10-15 minutes
• Teacher shows students where portfolios and passages are kept.
• Teacher demonstrates choosing new passages and filing old passages.
• Teacher demonstrates storing the pen, cloth or sponge.
**Sample Schedule**

The following is a sample of a weekly (5 day) schedule for the *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* partner fluency model. Notice that the first day of the week includes an accuracy check and the last day of the week may include optional comprehension and writing activities.

<table>
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<th><strong>Six-Minute Solution Intermediate Sample Schedule</strong></th>
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| **Monday** | • All partnerships have new *Practice Passages*. Partners preview the entire passage for accuracy by whisper-reading or silently reading, underlining unknown words. Teacher monitors and identifies any words unknown to either partner.  
  - **Option 1**: No timings on Mondays. Have partners use the allotted six minutes for previewing *Practice Passages*.  
  - **Option 2**: Allow extra time (10–15 minutes) on Mondays. Have partners first preview their *Practice Passage* for accuracy. Then, conduct partner fluency practice during the allotted six minutes. |
| **Tuesday through Thursday** | • *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* procedure: Fluency practice. |
| **Friday** | • Partners turn in the week's *Practice Passage* and select a new one for the following week.  
  - **Option**: Extend the amount of time to incorporate student practice with comprehension or summary writing strategies. Partners can use the current *Practice Passage* for these optional activities before turning it in and selecting a new passage for the following week. See Chapter 8 for suggestions. |
Six-Minute Solution Intermediate can be easily implemented in a variety of educational settings by following six easy steps, each of which is discussed in the first several chapters.

**Chapter 1: Assessments**
Assessment is critical in determining student fluency partnerships and in selecting the appropriate reading level of Practice Passages. This chapter provides step-by-step procedures for assessing students' oral reading fluency rates and instructional reading levels. It also includes recommended grade-level oral reading fluency rates.

**Chapter 2: Selecting Fluency Partners and Instructional Groups**
Careful selection of student fluency partnerships is critical to the success of Six-Minute Solution Intermediate. This chapter describes the procedures for selecting partners based on assessment data that has been collected via spreadsheet software or manual sorting. We also offer suggestions for program implementation in different configurations: entire classrooms, small groups, special-needs classes, intervention programs, and cross-age tutoring programs.

**Chapter 3: Introducing the Fluency Concept**
This chapter provides the necessary steps for introducing the concept of repeated reading to students.

**Chapter 4: Establishing Partner Behavior**
Training students to work in a cooperative manner and to provide polite feedback to each other are the focuses of this chapter.

**Chapter 5: Training Students in the Partnership Model**
Taking the time to properly train students in Six-Minute Solution Intermediate procedures will ensure that the program runs smoothly. This chapter discusses how to teach students to correctly carry out fluency procedures.

**Chapter 6: Managing Materials**
Well-organized program materials that are easily accessible to students will assist in the establishment of effective fluency routines. In this chapter, we include ideas for initial implementation and ongoing management of materials.

**Chapter 7: Student Progress and Record Keeping**
It is essential to monitor individual student progress and to make instructional decisions based on that progress. This chapter provides examples of how to interpret fluency data, adjust reading goals accordingly, and support students who are not making adequate progress.
Chapter B: Comprehension and Writing Strategies
Although *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* is primarily a fluency-building program, its *Practice Passages* may be used to instruct students in a variety of comprehension strategies as well. This chapter offers suggestions for teaching students how to summarize, paraphrase, retell, describe, sequence, compare, solve problems, and determine cause and effect. *Practice Passages* may also be used as models for teaching students the writing form of short summary. Examples of paragraph frames are included.

**Conclusion: More Than Six Minutes a Day**
With the *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* fluency partnership model, students can increase their oral reading fluency by practicing for only six minutes a day on a regular basis. There will be times, however, when teachers will need to devote more than six minutes a day to fluency practice. The *Conclusion* outlines some situations that may require implementing extended fluency practice.

**Assessment**
The *Assessment* section includes the following components:

- **Assessment Passages**
The *Assessment Passage* set consists of one passage per grade-level readability (grades 1–6), for a total of six passages. *Assessment Passages* can be used for two purposes:
  1. To obtain a student’s fluency score on a grade-level passage.
  2. To determine a student’s instructional level.

Using the *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate Assessment Passages*. Consult these directions for assessing cwpm, determining reading instructional level, collecting pretest/posttest data, and determining student progress.

- **San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability**
  - *San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability* (includes Teacher Record and Student Form). This assessment may be used to determine students’ instructional reading levels.

**Fluency Building Sheets**

- **Practice Passages**
  - *Practice Passages* are organized by Flesch-Kincaid readability level in sets of five for grades 1–6 (total of 150). The nonfiction, informational *Practice Passages* focus on science, social studies, history, and biographical topics. We use nonfiction passages for two important reasons:
    1. Struggling readers often lack general background knowledge in topics that *Practice Passages* cover. Students benefit from fluency practice with reading material that offers general-knowledge information.
2. It is easier to “hide” readability level in nonfiction material. To improve reading fluency, a student needs to practice rereading passages at his/her instructional reading level, which, in many cases, is below chronological grade-level placement.

The Practice Passages within each grade level are not thematic or dependent on one another. **Note:** While Practice Passages are available for grades 1 and 2 readability, their content is appropriate for older, rather than primary, students.

**Automatic Word Lists**
These lists include words that are most often encountered in written English. The words are grouped in sets of 25 and are repeated three times within each list.

**Fluency Building Sheets: Vowels and Vowel Combinations, Prefixes, and Suffixes**
In order to fluently read multisyllabic words, students must be able to quickly break words into decodable chunks. Knowing vowel combinations and word parts automatically is a necessity for advanced decoding. Students who need to develop this preskill will benefit from practicing with these fluency building sheets.

**Appendix**
The Appendix includes the following components:
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Fluency Assessment Report
- Initial Assessment Record (to rank and partner students)
- Fluency Record (data-collection form students use to record their cwpm scores)
- Fluency Graphs 1, 2, and 3 (data-collection forms students use to graph their cwpm progress). Choose the graph that best represents the current cwpm and goal cwpm for a student.
- Three Six-Minute Solution field tests (for readers who would like more information about the implementation and validation of Six-Minute Solution procedures).
- Blackline masters for introducing fluency concepts to students:
  - Summary Paragraph Frame 1
  - Summary Paragraph Frame 2
  - What Is Reading Fluency?
  - Why Is Reading Fluency Important?
Assessment is an important step to implementing *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate*. Determining students' reading levels helps you to select practice passages, assign student partners, and establish a baseline to measure student progress.

**Materials:**
- Two copies of a grade-level passage—one for the student to read from and another for the teacher to use to record total words read and errors. **Note:** Every student must read the same passage for the purpose of assessment. The teacher could have a laminated copy on which to record errors and stopping point with a water based or dry erase marking pen. The teacher would then erase between students. Or the teacher could run multiple copies of the same passage and use a separate one to record errors and stopping point for each student.
- Data sheet for the teacher to record correct words per minute and timer.
- Materials to determine instructional reading level (San Diego Quick Test of Sight Word Recognition, silent reading test or a placement accuracy test.)

**Estimated Time:**
1-2 hours

**Assess Students**
The first step in implementing *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* is to determine students' oral reading fluency rates and instructional reading levels. This initial assessment will guide Practice Passage selection, provide data for selecting partners, and provide baseline information so that student growth can be evaluated. More specifically, the two-part assessment that follows (Assessment 1 and Assessment 2) will determine:

1. A student's **oral reading fluency rate** (i.e., correct words per minute [cwpm] reading of a *Assessment Passage* at the student's grade-level placement).
2. A student's **instructional reading level** as determined by using one of the following measures: word recognition test (*San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability*, see Assessment), a silent reading test or a passage placement accuracy test to indicate the level at which a student can read with 91 percent–96 percent accuracy. **Note:** If you already use an informal reading inventory, you may use this data to determine a student's instructional reading level.

We recommend that students be assessed for fluency three times a year (e.g., in September, January, and May) to ensure appropriate student progress and to validate that student partners are working well together and recording scores accurately. In addition, it is always a good idea to keep parents informed of their children's fluency levels. The *Fluency Assessment Report* (see *Appendix*) can be used for this purpose.

Students who have significant reading problems may need a more extensive assessment than is described in this program in order to determine the nature and severity of their reading problems. The more extensive assess-
ment information can either replace Six-Minute Solution Intermediate assessments or be used in conjunction with them. Use the assessment information you gather to guide you in addressing underlying deficits in skills, such as phonemic awareness and decoding. Instruction in these important skills may be conducted prior to or along with the implementation of Six-Minute Solution Intermediate.

Assessment 1
Oral Reading Fluency

Materials:
- One copy of an Assessment Passage (see Assessment) for the student to read at the student’s grade-level placement, laminated or enclosed in a plastic sleeve. Each student in the class will read the same Assessment Passage individually (e.g., all sixth-grade students will read the same Level 6 Assessment Passage). Note: When listening to an individual student read, sit apart from the other students so that they are not within hearing distance. This would give them prior knowledge of the passage.
- One copy of the same laminated Assessment Passage on which to record each student’s reading errors and stopping point. Note: You may wish to have a laminated copy of the same Assessment Passage for each student on which to permanently record reading errors and stopping point. In that case, you will need as many copies as there are students in the class.
- A digital timer or stopwatch, a marking pen, and a clipboard.

Special circumstances: When working with groups of students who read significantly below grade level, it would not be appropriate to ask them to read a grade-level Assessment Passage. Instead, assess remedial students with a Assessment Passage at their estimated reading level. Continue assessing to determine the level at which a student reads with 95 percent accuracy (i.e., 5 errors in a 100-word passage). This would be the appropriate level for a student to begin building fluency.

Estimated time:
2.5 minutes per student

Procedure:
1. Give each student the laminated copy of the grade-level Assessment Passage and say, “The title of this passage is ___. When I say, ‘Please begin,’ I would like you to start reading here (point to the first word) and read out loud quickly and carefully until the timer sounds. If you do not know a word, I will tell it to you. Are you ready?”
2. Set the timer for one minute and say, “I will start the timer when you begin reading.”
3. Using a clipboard to hold the teacher copy of the Assessment Passage, follow along as the student reads, underlining errors. Mark a diagonal line when the timer sounds, indicating the point at which the student stopped reading. The use of the clipboard will keep the student from being distracted by any marks you may make.
4. Tell the student, "Thank you. Please return to your seat and ask ____ (the next student) to come over to read."

5. During the interval between students, determine the total number of words the student read, subtract any errors, and note the correct words per minute (cwpm) read.

6. After all students have read the Assessment Passage, record their cwpm scores on the Initial Assessment Record (see Appendix).

**Oral reading errors:**
- Mispronunciations, unless attributed to accent or dialect.
- Words supplied by the teacher.
- Word omissions.
- Dropped word endings, unless attributed to accent or dialect.
- Substitutions, even if the word meaning is unchanged (e.g., "home" for "house").
- Reversed order of words (e.g., "he was" for "was he") counts as two errors.
- Mispronunciation of proper nouns counts as one error every occurrence.

**Notes:**
- Repetitions (e.g., "the boy, the boy") are not counted as errors.
- Insertions are not counted as errors or as words read.

**Assessment 2**

**Instructional Reading Level**

Any of three types of assessments may be used to obtain a close approximation of a student's instructional reading level:
- Word recognition test or
- Group silent-reading test or
- Passage placement accuracy test

Although these three types of assessments may seem unrelated, they are good informal indicators of a student's reading ability. It is not necessary to administer all three tests to determine a student's instructional reading level. The advantage to using a group silent-reading test is that it can be administered to all students at the same time. While the class is taking the test, you can read with individual students to obtain their oral reading fluency rate. Alternatively, word recognition tests are given to each student individually, with students reading the words orally to you. Passage placement reading tests must also be administered individually. Word recognition tests and/or oral passage placement tests may be administered individually to students at the same time as the oral reading fluency test (Assessment 1).

**Word Recognition Test**

**Materials:**
- San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability (see Assessment).

**Estimated time:**
2.5 minutes per student
Procedure:
1. Make copies of the Student Form, Teacher Record, and Errors & Reading Levels scoring sheet.
2. Administer the test per the directions in the introductory paragraph.
3. Transfer student scores to the scoring sheet.

Group Silent Reading Test

Materials:
- Copies of a silent reading test for all students in the class.

Estimated time:
- Will vary, depending on the test.

Procedure:
1. Choose a silent reading test that can be administered to the entire class during one class period. The selected silent reading test may be teacher-prepared or commercial. The most important function of a silent reading test is to yield a measurable score that can be used to rank students according to their instructional reading levels. Examples of commercially prepared tests that lend themselves well to this procedure include:
   a. Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) (Scholastic, 2003). Scores are reported in Lexile levels.
   b. Gates-MacGinitie (MacGinitie, MacGinitie, Maria, & Dreyer, 2003). Scores are reported in percentiles.
   c. McLeod Test of Reading Comprehension (Consortium on Reading Excellence; CORE, 1999). Scores are reported in grade-level scores.
   d. Measure of Academic Progress (MAPs). This is a standardized computer test with scores reported in RIT (Rasch Unit) scores.
2. Explain the test directions to the class and complete the practice items with the entire group.
3. Instruct students to begin working on the silent reading test. Make sure that students have something they can do independently when they finish the test.
4. After all students have completed the test, record their scores.

Passage Placement Accuracy Test

Procedure:
1. Select a few grade-level Assessment Passages (see Assessment) based on your estimation of the student’s reading level.
2. Tell the student, “We need to find a reading level that is just right for you to practice reading. That means that the passage must be comfortable for you—not too easy and not too hard. In order to find that level, I am going to ask you to read a few passages to me.”
3. Give the student a copy of the Assessment Passage and say, “The title of this passage is _____. Please begin here (point to the first word) and read out loud to me. If you do not know a word, I will tell it to you. Are you ready? Please begin.” Note: The oral passage reading test is untimed.
4. When the student finishes reading the passage, ask, “How did you feel when you were reading the passage? Was it too easy? Was it too hard? Was it just right?”

Use the Determining Reading Levels Chart (following) to determine whether or not the student is reading the Assessment Passage at his/her independent, instructional, or frustration level. The frustration level is one at which the passage is simply too difficult for the student to read, and little or no learning will occur. The instructional level is one at which the material can be read by the student, but some teacher guidance and instruction are necessary for content comprehension. The instructional level is the most important level to determine since it is at this level that learning truly occurs. The independent level is one at which the student can read the passage easily and without teacher assistance or instruction.

### Determining Reading Levels Chart
(Using a 100-word passage)

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<th>Passage Errors Allowed</th>
<th>Passage Reading Level</th>
<th>Comprehension Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 or fewer errors</td>
<td>Independent (97%-100%)</td>
<td>Good to Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-9 errors</td>
<td>Instructional (91%-96%)</td>
<td>Good to Satisfactory</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 or more errors</td>
<td>Frustration (90% &amp; below)</td>
<td>Satisfactory/Fair/Poor</td>
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**Examples:**
- A student who reads a 100-word passage with 2 errors has an accuracy rate of 98 percent, which indicates that the passage is at the student’s independent reading level.
- A student who reads a 100-word passage with 5 errors has an accuracy rate of 95 percent, which indicates that the passage is at the student’s instructional reading level.
- A student who reads a 100-word passage with 12 errors has an accuracy rate of 88 percent, which indicates that the passage is at the student’s frustration level.

Students may be placed at their instructional or independent level for the purpose of building fluency. They should never practice fluency with a passage in which their reading is less than 90 percent accurate. Accuracy must precede fluency, so it is essential that students be monitored for accurate reading before repeated reading practice takes place. **Note:** Refer to “Using the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate Assessment Passages” (see Assessments) for information about determining reading instructional level, assessing cwpm, and collecting pretest/posttest data.

Many teachers assign students fluency passages at their instructional level with the intent of having them progress more quickly. Other teachers—especially those of reluctant readers—assign students fluency passages at their independent level with the intent of having them experience immediate success, resulting in increased motivation and self-esteem.
**Special Circumstances:** Students who are enrolled in Title 1, remedial reading, special education, or English Language Learner (ELL) classes or who have significant reading problems may be more appropriately assessed with an individually administered reading test such as the Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (Woodcock, 2000). This test will help you determine instructional reading levels and gather information about underlying reading problems.

**Appropriate Fluency Rate**

A student’s target fluency rate is based on his/her instructional reading level, not the current grade-level placement. For example, the initial goal for a sixth-grade student reading at a third-grade instructional level is 70-110 cwpm, which is the recommended oral reading rate for third-grade readers. Once the student has met the initial goal, increase the cwpm goal to the upper range or move the student to Practice Passages at the next grade level.

Keep in mind that student partners always read the same Practice Passage at the same time. A fifth-grade ELL student reading at a third-grade level may be partnered with a fifth-grade special education student also reading at the third-grade level. Occasionally, there may be an “outlying student”—one whose instructional reading level does not match that of any other student. In that case, the outlying student may need to be partnered with a teacher, an aide, or a classroom volunteer.

Refer to Table 1.1 (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005) for cwpm standards by grade level and school season. As a general rule, students scoring below the 50th percentile benefit from participating in a fluency building program.
Jan Hasbrouck and Gerald Tindal completed an extensive study of oral reading fluency in 2004. The results of their study are published in a technical report entitled, "Oral Reading Fluency: 90 Years of Measurement," which is available on the University of Oregon's website, brt.uoregon.edu/tech_reports.htm.

The table below shows the mean oral reading fluency of students in grades 1 through 8 as determined by Hasbrouck and Tindal's data.

You can use the information in this table to draw conclusions and make decisions about the oral reading fluency of your students. **Students scoring below the 50th percentile using the average score of two unpracticed readings from grade-level materials need a fluency-building program.** In addition, teachers can use the table to set the long-term fluency goals for their struggling readers.

Note that there is a difference between monitoring and placement. **Monitoring** with an assessment tool such as *Reading Fluency Monitor* can help you identify students who need to improve their fluency and monitor their progress over time.

**Placement** is the process of selecting an appropriate level of reading material and setting a reading rate goal within the context of a fluency-building program, such as *READ NATURALLY*. To place students in *READ NATURALLY*, use the *READ NATURALLY* placement table.

### Table 1.1
**2005 Hasbrouck & Tindal Oral Reading Fluency Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentile</th>
<th>Fall CWPM*</th>
<th>Winter CWPM*</th>
<th>Spring CWPM*</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>90</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* CWPM = Correct Words Per Minute
Selecting Fluency Partners and Instructional Groups

The appropriate selection of student fluency partnerships is essential to the success of the program. This chapter describes the procedure for ranking students based on assessment results and forming partnerships based on the data.

Materials:
- Fluency data for each student (i.e., a fluency score and an independent/instructional reading level score).
- A student ranking sheet or a computer spreadsheet program that generates ranking order.

Estimated time:
1 hour

Selecting Partners

When selecting fluency partners, match students as closely as possible by both oral reading fluency rates and instructional reading levels. Assign partners based on ranking. For example, if using a spreadsheet program, sort first for fluency score and then for reading level. Students ranked as #1 and #2 would be partners, students ranked as #3 and #4 would be partners, and so on. Partners must be closely matched. As a general rule, their fluency rates should be within 10–15 words of each other. An appropriate match is critical to success.

An example of an appropriate partnership match would be two sixth-grade students at grade 3 instructional reading level with oral fluency rates within 10–15 words of each other. If one of these students had an oral reading fluency rate of 85 cwpm and the other student had an oral reading fluency rate of 45 cwpm, they would not be matched as fluency partners. The reason for this is that the student with the lower cwpm oral fluency rate would not be able to follow along with the partner’s more rapid rate of reading.

Keeping in mind that student partners must always read the same Practice Passage, you could partner a fifth-grade ELL student reading at the third-grade level with a fifth-grade special education student who is also reading at the third-grade level. Occasionally, there may be an “outlying student”—one whose instructional reading level does not match that of any other student. This student may be partnered with a teacher, an aide, or a classroom volunteer.

Once partnerships are selected, label the partners as Partner 1 and Partner 2. Partner 1 should be the stronger of the two partners. For example, two sixth-grade students—each with an instructional level of fourth grade—are partners. Partner 1 has a fluency rate of 72 cwpm and Partner 2 has a fluency rate of 68 cwpm. Note: Students must be assigned Grade-Level Practice Passage timings at their independent or instructional grade level.

Fluency partners may be selected by using spreadsheet software or by manually sorting students’ oral reading fluency and instructional reading-level scores.
Using Spreadsheets to Select Fluency Partners
For large groups of students, the easiest way to select fluency partners is to use spreadsheet software. The following steps will help you create the spreadsheet:

1. Begin by opening a new document (blank spreadsheet) and naming it (e.g., Language Arts Period 3, Mr. Smith's Sixth-Grade Class).
2. Label six columns with the following headings: Last Name, First Name, Date, Grade, Oral Reading Fluency Score (cwpm), and Instructional Reading Level.
3. Enter data in the six columns for each student.
4. Sort the data first by fluency (cwpm) and then by instructional reading level, in either ascending or descending order.
5. Assign fluency partners based on the sort (e.g., the first two students on the list would be partners, the second two students would be partners, and so on).

Manually Sorting Scores to Select Fluency Partners
Another method you can use to select fluency partners is manual sorting. The following steps will help you rank student scores more easily:

1. Sort your students' oral fluency scores from Assessment 1 (see Chapter 1) in ascending order—from lowest to highest.
2. In the first column on the Initial Assessment Record (see Appendix), list students in the order of their oral-reading fluency scores.
3. In the second column, list the oral-reading fluency score for each student.
4. In the third column, list the students' instructional reading-level scores—from the San Diego Quick Assessment (see Assessment).
5. Match students as closely as possible based on the data, making sure that each partner's fluency score is within 10–15 words of one another and that both students are reading at the same instructional level.

Selecting Instructional Groupings
Although Six-Minute Solution Intermediate is fundamentally designed for the entire classroom, the following group configurations may be used successfully as well:

- Small groups within a class
- Individual fluency programs
- Parent-student partnerships
- Cross-age partnerships

Entire Classroom
In this instructional grouping, the entire classroom is assessed and fluency partnerships are assigned. All Partner 1s read the assigned Practice Passage to their partners for one minute. While they are reading, Partner 2s mark Partner 1 errors and stopping point on their own laminated copy of the passage. Partner 1s then record their own cwpm score on their Fluency Record or Fluency Graph (see Appendix). All Partner 2s then read the same Practice Passage for one minute. Results are tracked by Partner 1s on their laminated copy of the passage. Partner 2s then record their own cwpm score on their Fluency Record.
or Fluency Graph. When fluency practice is completed for the day, partners store their portfolio, which contains the laminated Practice Passage, Fluency Records or Fluency Graphs, and a zipper-lock plastic bag with a dry-erase pen and erasing cloth.

Small Groups Within a Class
Repeated reading practice can also be implemented in a small-group setting—such as within a guided reading group—using the same Practice Passage for students who read at the same instructional level. Sample Schedule is as follows:

Monday
- The teacher and students preview the passage for accuracy.
- The teacher sets a timer for one minute. Students whisper-read the passage to themselves, underlining difficult words.
- When the timer sounds, students calculate their cwpm score and note the number on their own Fluency Record or Fluency Graph. This is their initial reading score.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
- The teacher and students choral-read the passage together for one minute.
- The teacher then sets a timer for one minute. Students whisper-read the passage to themselves.
- When the timer sounds, students calculate their cwpm score and note the number on their Fluency Record or Fluency Graph.

Friday
- Final timing, using one of two options:
  **Option 1**—Students pair up. The teacher sets a timer for one minute. One student reads while the partner follows along, underlining any reading errors and circling the last word read. Partner tells the reader how many cwpm were read, and reader records the number on his/her Fluency Record or Fluency Graph. This is the final timing. The teacher then resets the timer for one minute. Students repeat the process, with roles reversed.
  **Option 2**—The teacher listens to each student read for one minute while the other students follow along silently. The teacher tells each student his/her cwpm read on the final timing. Students graph their own results.

Individual Fluency Programs
Although all struggling readers should have reading fluency practice as an instructional goal, the partnership model is not appropriate in all educational settings. In a special education, remedial, or resource room—where students’ instructional reading levels may be very diverse—it is often not possible to select evenly matched fluency partners. In these cases, individual fluency programs should be developed.

To establish an individual fluency program, the teacher will need to assess each student to determine the appropriate level for fluency practice. Students should be introduced to the concept of repeated reading and given a
rationale as to why they will be engaging in the practice. Finally, each student will need his/her own fluency folder containing two Practice Passages—one for the student to read from and the other for the teacher to follow along with—a Fluency Graph, and a marking pen for filling in the graph each day.

There are two options for conducting individual fluency programs. With Option 1, each student reads a Practice Passage at his/her individual instructional level, and all students follow the same steps every day. With Option 2, each student reads a Practice Passage at his/her individual instructional level, and then proceeds through the steps at his/her own rate.

**Option 1**
- **Monday**—Each student selects a new Practice Passage at his/her own instructional level. Students read the passage on their own, underlining difficult or unknown words. The teacher meets with each student individually. The teacher reads the entire passage with the student for accuracy, modeling fluent reading. Then, the student reads the passage while being timed for one minute to obtain an initial cwpm score. The student graphs the cwpm score on his/her Fluency Graph.
- **Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday**—All students take turns reading their Practice Passage to the teacher while being timed for one minute. Each student then graphs his/her cwpm score on his/her Fluency Graph. When not meeting with the teacher, students practice whisper-reading their passage.
- **Friday**—All students take turns reading their Practice Passage to the teacher while being timed for one minute in order to obtain a final score. Each student then graphs the final cwpm score on that particular passage on his/her Fluency Graph.

**Option 2**
- **Step 1**—Each student selects a new Practice Passage at his/her own instructional level.
- **Step 2**—The teacher meets with each student individually and together they choral-read the passage for accuracy (untimed).
- **Step 3**—Each student reads the passage to the teacher for one minute. The teacher tells the student how many cwpm he/she read. This is the student’s initial score.
- **Step 4**—The teacher and the student select a target goal together. The goal should be 20–40 words above the initial timing. For example, if a student reads 50 cwpm on an initial timing, the target goal could be 80. **Note:** Select a target goal that is reasonably attainable for the student, taking into consideration his/her reading level and motivation.
- **Step 5**—Every day during fluency practice, the student reads his/her Practice Passage to the teacher for one minute and graphs the cwpm on his/her Fluency Graph. When students reach their oral reading goal with fewer than five reading errors, they have “passed” the passage. **Note:** Some students may be able to fluently read a passage in one week or less, while others may need to practice reading the same passage for two or more consecutive weeks before they reach their predetermined goal.
Parent-Student Partnerships
Parents can be easily trained to conduct one-minute fluency timings and data-recording procedures either at the school or at home. Working with their children on Automatic Word Lists, Fluency Building Sheets, and Practice Passages is a highly effective way for parents to support a school's readers. Home data-recording sheets can be brought to school and checked by the teacher. Additional Practice Passages can be sent home based on the data. As parents conduct fluency timings at home, they will acquire first-hand knowledge of their children's reading improvement on a daily basis.

Cross-Age Partnerships
Older students may be assigned as fluency partners to younger students. The older students conduct one-minute fluency timings and record the data of their younger partners.
Introducing the Fluency Concept

This chapter provides a model for introducing the concept of fluency to students. We believe that students deserve an explanation prior to engaging in any new procedure. They are more likely to be enthusiastic participants when they understand the “what” and the “why.” In the words of noted educator Dr. Anita Archer, “Rationale reduces resistance.”

Materials:
- A copy of a sample Practice Passage (see Fluency Building Sheets) for each student. **Note:** The readability level of the passage should match that of the lowest reader in the class.
- A copy of a Fluency Graph (select from 1, 2, or 3 in the Appendix) for each student.
- Overhead transparencies of the sample Practice Passage and the selected Fluency Graph.
- **Optional:** Overhead transparencies of blackline masters “What Is Fluency?” and “Why Is Fluency Important?” (see Appendix).
- Marking pens for students and an erasable marking pen for the teacher.
- Color markers for teacher and students.
- A timer.

Estimated time: 20–30 minutes

Use Activity Procedure or Scripted procedure

Activity Procedure
- **Step 1: Select the Practice Passage.** Select one passage for classroom demonstration and training. The readability of the selected passage should match the lowest level of reading in the class. For example, in a sixth-grade class, if the student who reads at the lowest level reads at the third-grade level, the passage selected for training should be at a third-grade readability level. It is important that students do not struggle while reading the Practice Passage.
- **Step 2: Introduce the concept of fluency.** Conduct the Activity Procedure or the Scripted Procedure, following.
  - Using grade-appropriate language, introduce students to the value of building fluency. You may paraphrase the information in the Introduction section and discuss the benefits of rereading, the concept of “practice makes perfect,” and the correlation among fluency, comprehension, and work completion.

Optional Scripted Procedure
- Present the overhead transparency of “What Is Reading Fluency?” and say:
  - “Our class will be starting a daily reading fluency program. Before I explain the program to you, I want to talk about what fluency is and why it is important. Reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately. That means that you know the words. Reading fluency is also
the ability to read text quickly. However, fluency is not speed-reading. Good readers read quickly, but not too quickly. Finally, reading fluency is the ability to read with expression. As readers, we want to be sure to stop at the punctuation marks and read so that other people can understand what we are saying. That means that we need to clearly say each word, not read so fast that the words run together. We need to remember the three parts to fluent reading: reading accurately, reading quickly, and reading with expression.

- “Listen. When we read fluently, we are reading accurately, quickly, and with expression.”
- “Everyone, when you read fluently, you are reading how? (Students should respond, “accurately.”) You are also reading how? (Students should respond, “quickly.”) But you are also reading with what, everyone?” (Students should respond, “with expression.”)
- “So, reading fluently is reading accurately, quickly, and with expression. Say it with me, everyone.” (Students should respond, “Reading fluently is reading accurately, quickly, and with expression.”)
- Present the overhead transparency of “Why Is Reading Fluency Important?” and say:
  - “It is important to work on improving reading fluency for three main reasons. How many reasons?” (Students should respond, “three.”)
  - “The most important reason is because reading fluency is related to reading comprehension. Fluent readers understand what they are reading. Fluent readers have good what, everyone?” (Students should respond, “comprehension.”)
  - “If we can read words easily or fluently, we can pay better attention to what we are reading. So the main reason we are going to work on reading fluency is that we will improve our what, everyone? Our …” (Students should respond, “comprehension.”)
  - “Fluent readers like to read because reading is easy for them. If reading is easy for us, we will read more and if we read more, we will learn more. So, another reason for improving reading fluency is to be able to read more independently. We are going to practice reading fluency so that we will become what kind of readers, everyone?” (Students should respond, “independent.”)
  - “Finally, fluent readers need less time to complete their class assignments and their homework. Fluent readers read faster, so they finish work faster and have more time for outside activities. Raise your hand if you would like to be able to finish your homework in less time. (Pause for students’ response.) So, we will practice reading fluency so that we will improve our what, everyone?” (Students should respond, “work completion.”)

Activity Procedure

- **Step 3: Explain the Practice Passage.** Pass out copies of the selected Practice Passage to students. Point out the numbers at the beginning of each line in the passage. Explain to students that these numbers will help them keep track of how many words they read in one minute.
- **Step 4: Model the reading fluency procedure.**
  - Explain to students that when they read a passage, they will start with the first word and read until the timer sounds. As they read, they should track with a pen (without making marks) and underline any unknown or difficult words. When the timer sounds, they will draw a diagonal line after the last word read.
  - Demonstrate the above procedure with the overhead transparency of the selected *Practice Passage*.
  - Continue using the transparency to demonstrate **how to count the total number of words read.** Starting at the number at the beginning of the last line read, simply count from that number to the last word read. This is the total number of words read. Write that number in the calculation notation at the bottom of the passage page. Count the number of underlined (i.e., unknown or incorrect) words. Write that number in the calculation notation at the bottom of the passage page. Subtract the number of underlined words from the total number of words to determine the **correct words per minute (cwpm).** Write that number in the calculation notation at the bottom of the passage page.

Optional Scripted Procedure

- **“Listen.** When we read a passage, we will start with the first word of the passage (point) and read until the timer sounds. Where will we start, everyone?” (Students should respond, “with the first word of the passage.”)
- **“As we read,** we should track with our finger or pen and be ready to underline any unknown or difficult words. A difficult word is a word that we cannot figure out within a couple of seconds. What will we do with difficult words, everyone?” (Students should respond, “underline them.”)
- **“When the timer sounds,** we will draw a diagonal line after the last word we read. Watch me.” (Demonstrate drawing a diagonal line.)
- **“Next,** we need to figure out the total number of correct words we read. To do this, we look at where we put the diagonal line after the last word we read. What do we do first, everyone?” (Students should respond, “find the last word we read.”)
- **“Then we go back to the beginning** of that line. Where do we go, everyone?” (Students should respond, “to the beginning of the last line we read.”)
- **“We find the number count on that line.** What do we find, everyone?” (Students should respond, “the number count.”)
- **“Then we count from** that number to the last word read. That is the total number of words we read. What is it, everyone?” (Students should respond, “the total number of words read.”)
- **“We write that number** on this line at the bottom of the page.” (Write the number on the “Total Words Read” line.)
- **“Next,** we count the number of underlined words. What do we count, everyone?” (Students should respond, “the number of underlined words.”)
- "We write that number on this line." (Write the number on the "Errors" line.)
- "Then, we subtract the number of underlined words from the total number of words read. The answer gives us the number of correct words read per minute, or the cwpm. (Write the number on the "CWPM" line.) What does it tell us, everyone?" (Students should respond, "the number of correct words read per minute.")

Activity Procedure

**Step 5: Students whisper-read the Practice Passage.** Conduct the *Activity Procedure* or the *Scripted Procedure*, following.

- Set the timer for one minute and ask students to whisper-read the passage, following the procedures of tracking, underlining unknown/difficult words, and drawing a diagonal line after the last word read when the timer sounds. **Note:** Students must whisper-read in order to simulate oral reading.
- When the timer sounds, ask students to count the total number of words read, count the number of underlined words, and subtract the number of underlined words to determine their cwpm scores. Monitor students carefully.
- Set the timer for another minute, and ask students to reread the passage, beginning with the first word.
- When the timer sounds, ask students to determine their cwpm scores.
- Lead a group discussion about fluency practice. Ask students to raise their hands if their cwpm scores were higher with the second reading. Solicit student reflection on why they might have read more words the second time.

Optional Scripted Procedure

- "Now it is your turn. I am going to set the timer for one minute. When I tell you to begin, I want you to whisper-read the passage, beginning with the first word. It is important that you whisper-read because we are practicing oral—not silent—reading. As you read, underline any unknown or difficult words. When the timer sounds, draw a diagonal mark after the last word you read. Let's check: Will you read silently? (Students should respond, "no.") How will you read? (Students should respond, "whisper-read.") What will you do when the timer sounds? (Students should respond, "draw a slash mark after the last word I read.")"
- When the timer sounds, say, "Draw a diagonal mark after the last word you read. Go back to the beginning of that line. Say the number and continue counting until you reach the last word read. That is your total number of words. Write that number down at the bottom of the passage page." Monitor students carefully.
- "Now, go back to the beginning of the passage and count the number of underlined words. Write that number down at the bottom of the page." Monitor students carefully.
- "Subtract that number from your total number of words, and write it on the last line." Monitor students carefully.
• "Now you have your number of correct words per minute, or cwpm."
• "Now you are going to whisper-read the passage again. Start with the first word of the passage, whisper-read, and underline unknown or difficult words. When the timer sounds this time, circle the last word you read instead of drawing a diagonal line. Ready, please begin."
• When the timer sounds, say, "Circle the last word you read. Go back to the beginning of that line. Say the number and continue counting until you reach the last word read. That is your total number of words. Write that number down." Monitor students carefully.
• "Now go back to the beginning of the passage, and count the number of underlined words. Write that number down. Subtract that number from your total number of words." Monitor students carefully.
• "Now you have your cwpm score for your second reading."
• "Compare your first timing score with your second timing score. (Pause as students compare.) Raise your hand if you read more words the second time than you read the first time." The vast majority of students will have read more words the second time.
• "Turn to your neighbor (partner) and tell why you think you read more words the second time." Monitor students carefully.
• "As I monitored, I heard many of you say that when you read the second time, you already knew the words. You were familiar with the passage, so you could read faster the second time. There were no surprises on the second reading. You are exactly right. The more you practice a skill, the better you get. So in order to become more fluent readers, we are going to practice every day."

Activity Procedure

• **Step 6: Students graph their cwpm scores.** Conduct the Activity Procedure or the Scripted Procedure, following.
  - Using the overhead transparency of the Fluency Graph, demonstrate how to use it to record cwpm scores.
  - Using their copy of the Fluency Graph, have students practice graphing their cwpm scores on their first and second readings of the demonstration passage.

Optional Scripted Procedure

• "Now we are going to look at how to graph cwpm scores. Each one of you has a graph that looks like this (show the example Fluency Graph). At the top, you will write your name, your partner's name, the class you are in, and the date you first started using this graph. For today's practice, just fill in your name."
• "Notice that there is a place for the date and the passage number at the bottom of the graph. Fill in today's date and the practice passage number. Since all of us are reading the same passage on the same day, we will all have the same date and passage number."
• "Now look at the numbers on the left side of the graph. Those numbers represent the number of correct words you read in one minute. What do the numbers stand for?" (Students should respond, "number of correct words read in one minute.")
• “Do you see a place for errors on this graph? (Students should respond, “no.”) You will not be recording errors on this graph. You will record only correct words per minute, or cwpm, from the practice passage onto the graph.”

• “Look at the bottom of the graph. Do the numbers start with 1? (Students should respond, “no.”) What do they start with? (Students should respond, “5.”) That’s right; the numbers are in increments of 5.”

• “Let’s pretend that I read 45 cwpm on my initial timing. Put your finger on the number 45. I will color in the squares from 5 to 45 to graph my initial timing.”

• “Let’s pretend that on my second timing, I read 52 cwpm. Is the number 52 on the graph? (Students should respond, “no.”) So I will have to estimate. To do that, I will go to the number closest to 52. What number will that be? (Students should respond, “50.”) Then I will fill in the column just a little higher than 50 to show that I read more than 50 cwpm. This time I will color in the squares from 5 to just past 50 to graph my second timing.”

• “Now it’s your turn. Graph your first and second timing scores. Raise your hand if you need help.” Walk around the classroom and monitor as students graph their cwpm scores.
Establishing Partner Behavior

In order for the partnership model to be successful, students need to work together in a polite and respectful manner. This chapter offers suggestions for introducing the concept of a working relationship within a cooperative partnership.

Students need to be instructed in appropriate fluency partnership behavior (e.g., leaning in and whispering), remembering that the only people who need to hear them are their partners, and providing appropriate corrective feedback on missed words. Addressing classroom noise level during training is key to preventing many potential problems. Teachers are often amazed at the low level of classroom noise when fluency timings are in progress.

Materials:
None

Estimated time:
10 minutes

Use Activity Procedure or Scripted Procedure

Activity Procedure

- Tell students that they will be working with a fluency partner for six minutes each day, emphasizing that the partnership is a working relationship and not necessarily a friendship. You may want to give an example of cooperation within a workplace, relating that although people do not necessarily like everyone they work with and they may not want to be close friends, they still need to treat each other with respect. You may also want to explain that the partnerships were assigned based on assessment information and the fact that “the computer assigned the partners.” Note: If the concept of fluency is discussed completely with the class, there are generally fewer problems within partnerships. However, very occasionally, there may be partners who simply do not work well together. In that case, partners may need to be reassigned.

- Set rules about the appropriate noise level during fluency practice. Remind students that half the class will be reading aloud at the same time, and that the only people who need to hear them are their fluency partners. Tell students that they will “lean in and whisper” when reading to their partners. Model the procedure, giving positive and negative examples.

- Teach students to give polite feedback during the error-correction procedure (see Figure 4.1).
Figure 4.1
An Example of the Error-Correction Procedure

While the reader is reading aloud for one minute, the fluency partner follows along and underlines any errors. When the timer sounds, the partner notes the last word read, then provides polite feedback in the following manner.

Partner: “You read ___ (total number of) words. I heard ____ (number of) errors.” The partner then points to each underlined (incorrect) word and pronounces it correctly for the reader. The partner asks the reader to repeat the word correctly.

Reader: Records the cwpm on the Fluency Graph.

Note: Establish a “No Arguing” rule between partners at this point in the training.

Optional Scripted Procedure

- “We are going to be working in partnerships to practice reading fluency for six minutes every day. Let me tell you about partnerships. Partnerships are a working relationship. What are they, everyone? (Students should respond, “a working relationship.”) A working relationship means that you work together. You do not have to be friends with your partners. You do not have to eat lunch together or walk down the hall together. You do not have to talk to each other outside of this class. But here is what you do need to do. For the six minutes that you are working in the partnership, you have to be polite and respectful. What do you have to be, everyone?” (Students should respond, “polite and respectful.”)

- “In your partnerships, one of you will be Partner 1 and one of you will be Partner 2. All Partners 1s will read at the same time while all Partner 2s will listen, follow along, and underline any reading errors. That means that half the class will be reading at one time. If all Partner 1s read in a regular speaking voice, is it possible that the noise level in the room will be too high? Yes or no? (Students should respond, “yes.”) In order to keep the noise level down so that partners can hear each other read, you will lean in and whisper. What will you do, everyone?” (Students should respond, “lean in and whisper.”)

- Choose a student partner to demonstrate the procedure: “I am (Juan’s) partner. Watch me read to Juan.” Demonstrate reading in a normal speaking tone while looking straight ahead. “Did I lean in and whisper? Yes or no? (Students should respond, “no.”). Watch me again.” Demonstrate the “lean in and whisper” procedure. “Did I lean in and whisper?” (Students should respond, “yes.”)

- “While your partner is reading, you will follow along and underline any errors you hear. What will you do, everyone? (Students should respond, “follow along and underline errors.”) When the timer sounds, you will draw a diagonal line after the last word your partner read. What will you do when the timer sounds, everyone? (Students should respond,
“draw a diagonal line after the last word my partner read.”) Then you will figure out your partner’s correct words per minute, or cwpm, score. What will you do, everyone? (Students should respond, “figure out my partner’s correct words per minute score.”)

• “The next step is reporting to your partner. What is the next step, everyone? (Students should respond, “reporting to my partner.”) First, you will tell your partner the total number of words that he/she read. Say, ‘You read ____ words.’ What do you say, everyone?” (Students should respond, “you read ____ words.”)

• “Then you say, ‘I heard ____ errors.’ What do you say, everyone? (Students should respond, “I heard ____ errors.”) Why do you suppose I want you to say ‘I heard ____ errors’ rather than ‘You made ____ errors’? (Students should suggest it sounds better.) Yes, it sounds kinder. Then you tell your partner their correct words per minute. That is the number they will graph at the end of the session.”

• “Finally, you will point to any reading errors your partner made, one word at a time, and pronounce the word correctly for your partner. Your partner will then read the word again correctly.”

• “There is one very important rule you need to follow when working with your partner. The rule is ‘No Arguing.’ What is the rule, everyone? (Students should respond, “no arguing.”) The reason we have a ‘No Arguing’ rule is that arguing wastes time. What does it do, everyone? (Students should respond, “it wastes time.”) If your partner underlines a word that you think you read correctly, you could stop reading and tell your partner that he/she made a mistake. But if you do that, you will miss the rest of the timing for the day and won’t be able to record a score. So, if your partner hears you read a word incorrectly, it is counted as an error because there is no what? (Students should respond, “no arguing.”) The best thing for partners to do is to treat each other fairly.”
Train Students in the Partnership Model

Taking the time to properly train students in *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* procedures will ensure that the program runs smoothly. This chapter discusses how to teach students correct fluency procedures. Once students are properly trained, the entire fluency practice should take only six minutes of the reading period each day.

Devote a *minimum* of two to three class periods to training (Steps 3–6 in *Chapters 3–6*). We recommend that an explicit instructional model be employed when teaching the procedures. Each procedure should be introduced through modeling, then considerable guided practice time should be allowed with the teacher walking around the classroom to monitor, give feedback, and remodel procedures as necessary before students practice the procedure independently.

Teachers may want to randomly assign or specifically select partners for this step so that students can practice the procedure before teaming up with their ultimately assigned partners. Once all students feel comfortable with the procedure, they can then be placed with their assigned fluency partners.

**Materials:**
- For each fluency partnership, one pocket portfolio that includes two copies of a preselected *Practice Passage* (either laminated or placed in a plastic sleeve) and two copies of a *Fluency Graph* (one for each partner).
- For each fluency partnership, a zipper-lock plastic bag containing a dry-erase marker and erasing cloth.
- A *Fluency Graph* for each student.
- Overhead transparencies of the selected *Grade-Level Practice Passage* and *Fluency Graph*.
- A timer.

**Estimated time:**
20–30 minutes

**Use Activity Procedure or Scripted Procedure**

**Activity Procedure**
- Select a *Practice Passage* at the readability level that matches the lowest reading level in the class.
- Seat students with fluency partners (randomly assigned or specifically selected) and assign them the numbers 1 and 2.
- Using the overhead transparency of the selected *Practice Passage*, model the fluency partnership with a student partner, emphasizing how the listener should track the words being read by the partner. Tracking helps students keep their place as their partners read and makes marking errors easier.
- Model the procedure for marking errors and noting the stopping point.
- Model the error-correction procedure (see *Figure 4.1* in *Chapter 4*).
- Model how to calculate cwpm by counting the total number of words read and subtracting errors. For example:
Using the overhead transparency of the Fluency Graph, review how to graph cwpm scores.

- After reviewing and modeling all aspects of fluency partnership activities, have students practice the fluency procedure. Set the timer for one minute, and ask all Partner 1s to read. Remind them to lean in and whisper-read to their partners. Remind Partner 2s to track their partner’s reading.
- Instruct Partner 2s to give polite feedback to Partner 1s.
- Set the timer again for one minute and ask Partner 2s to read. Remind them to lean in and whisper-read to their partners. Remind Partner 1s to track their partner’s reading.
- Instruct Partner 1s to give polite feedback to Partner 2s.

Optional Scripted Procedure

- Select a student with whom to demonstrate the partner procedure. Ask the student to read, and instruct him/her to make a few reading errors. Say, “Watch as my partner Sarita and I conduct our fluency timings. Sarita is Partner 1, so she will read first. Watch and see what I do while she is reading.”
- Set the timer for one minute and ask the student to begin reading. Model tracking with a pen and underlining reading errors as the student reads.
- After the timer sounds, ask, “What did you observe me doing with my pen as my partner was reading? (Students should respond, “tracking.”) Yes, it is important to follow along by tracking under each word as my partner reads. What did I do when I heard an error? (Students should respond, “you underlined it.”) Yes, I underlined the word and kept tracking. Did I make any extra marks on the passage? (Students should respond, “no.”) That’s correct. I made a mark only if I heard an error. If I had drawn a line under each word my partner read, would I have been able to tell when she made an error? Yes or no? (Students should respond, “no.”). Also, marking under all of the words would be messy and hard to clean off in only one minute.”
- “Now listen to me give polite feedback to Sarita: ‘You read 86 words. I heard 2 errors. 86 - 2 = 84. 84 is your cwpm score. Mark that number on your graph. You will color in the squares later.’ ”
- “Now I need to tell Sarita the words she missed and ask her to repeat them.” Point to the first error and say, “This word is ____ . What word?” Continue with the other missed words.
- “Now it is everyone’s turn. Raise your hand if you are Partner 1s. Raise your hand if you are Partner 2s. When I say, ‘Please begin,’ all Partner 1s will lean in and whisper-read to their partners. All Partner 2s should have their pens and be ready to track their partner’s reading, mark reading errors, and draw a diagonal line at the stopping point. Please begin.”
- When the timer sounds, say, “All Partner 2s, give polite feedback to Partner 1s.” Partner 1s mark their cwpm scores on their graph. Monitor students carefully.
- “Now it is Partner 2’s turn. When I say ‘Please begin,’ all Partner 2s will lean in and whisper-read to their partners. All Partner 1s should have their pens and be ready to track their partner’s reading, mark reading errors, and draw a diagonal line at the stopping point. Please begin.”
- When the timer sounds, say, “Now, Partner 1s should give polite feedback to Partner 2s.” Partner 2s mark their cwpm scores on their graph. Monitor students carefully.
- At the end of the timings, have one partner from each partnership put the materials away.
Managing Materials

Well-organized materials that are easily accessible to students will assist in the establishment of effective fluency routines. This chapter includes ideas for initial implementation and ongoing management of Six-Minute Solution Intermediate materials.

Materials:
- One pocket portfolio for each partnership. Label each portfolio with the names of Partner 1 and Partner 2.
- Each portfolio should hold two copies of the same Practice Passage (laminated or enclosed in a plastic sleeve), a Fluency Graph for each student, and a zipper-lock plastic bag containing a dry-erase marker and erasing cloth.
- Stored Practice Passages in a central file that is accessible to students in order of readability.

Estimated Time:
10–15 minutes

Activity Procedure
- Practice Passages for each partnership. (Practice Passages are numbered-coded by grade level [e.g., all fifth-grade-level passages are numbered in the 500s, all sixth-grade-level passages are numbered in the 600s]. This coding system enables teachers to note reading levels without the levels being obvious to students.)
- Tell the class where the Practice Passages and partnership portfolios will be located.
- Demonstrate the process for choosing a new passage on Friday for fluency practice the next week:
  - Take the currently used Practice Passages out of the plastic sleeves.
  - Return the passages to the designated file and select two copies of a different Practice Passage within the same readability level or per the teacher’s instruction.
- Teach students to return their partnership portfolios—with all materials—to the designated location.

Additional Fluency Tips
- Once students are trained in the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate instructional format (see Table I.1 in the Introduction), use the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate Sample Schedule (see Program Overview). It is most effective and efficient for students to begin reading a new Practice Passage on the first day of the school week.
- Make certain that each partnership knows who is Partner 1 and who is Partner 2. Partner 1 is the stronger reader and always reads first. However, do not share that information with students; simply state that Partner 1 reads first for management purposes.
Tell students where they will sit during fluency practice. For example, some teachers make a seating arrangement for the language arts period that places partners next to each other. Other teachers have Partner 1s move beside Partner 2s' desks.

Begin the first fluency practice session of the week with an accuracy check. Have students read the Practice Passage—untimed—to determine any unknown or difficult words. If neither of the partners knows a word, supply it for them. This accuracy check should occur only on the first day of a new Practice Passage each week.

Remember that students need a minimum of three to five repeated readings of the same Practice Passage. Since both partners will be reading the same Practice Passage, they will hear it twice a day. Practice Passages should be changed once a week so that students are not able to memorize them. Note: The reading level of a Practice Passage is changed only after teacher review and assessment.

Remind students that they are responsible for keeping to the six-minute time frame:
- 1 minute for the partners to get ready.
- 1 minute for Partner 1 to read.
- 1 minute for Partner 2 to tell Partner 1 the total number of words read, the errors, corrections, and cwpm. Partner 1 quickly records his/her cwpm.
- 1 minute for Partner 2 to read.
- 1 minute for Partner 1 to tell Partner 2 the total number of words read, the errors, corrections, and cwpm. Partner 2 quickly records his/her cwpm.
- 1 minute for both partners to color in their own graphs and put materials away.

Generally speaking, fluency partners provide accountability for each other. Occasionally, a partnership may appear to be awarding inflated scores. A word or two in private to the “suspects” should solve the problem, along with maintaining close proximity while the partnership is conducting its timings.

Continually monitor students closely during the six-minute fluency practices.
Student Progress and Record Keeping

Record keeping is an essential component of Six-Minute Solution Intermediate. It is critical to monitor improvement and make instructional decisions based on individual student progress. This may be accomplished by using either the Fluency Record or the Fluency Graphs (see Appendix). Teach students how to graph their own progress. Students tend to enjoy using Fluency Records and Fluency Graphs, as these tools make it easy for them to see their progress. Graphs can be especially motivating to students who have not had much reading success in the past. It gives them a concrete way to see their reading skills improve.

As a general rule, students who repeatedly read Practice Passages at the correct instructional level make weekly progress—even if only by an increase of a few correct words per minute. Give special attention to any student whose reading rates are not increasing from week to week.

Determine whether students are reading at the expected rate for their instructional reading levels (see Table 1.1 in Chapter 1). Remember, each student should read at the rate commensurate with the instructional reading level, not the grade-level placement. Reading rates increase as students are able to read more difficult material.

Check your students’ Fluency Records or Fluency Graphs on a regular basis in order to determine that:

- Adequate progress is being made.
- Students have been assigned appropriate Practice Passages—neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Students have been assigned appropriate fluency partners.
- It is the appropriate time to increase the difficulty level of the Practice Passage being used by partners.

Making Instructional Decisions Based on Fluency Graphs

The following examples demonstrate how the information on a student’s Fluency Record or Fluency Graph can help you make important instructional decisions.

Example 1: Kevin

Kevin is a fifth-grade student with a second-grade instructional reading level. Based on Table 1.1 (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005) in Chapter 1, he is within the expected reading rate for his instructional level. Kevin is also making adequate progress. The first five days on his Fluency Graph (see Figure 7.1) reflect rereading the same Practice Passage. His first reading on Monday was 60 cwpm. After practicing the passage four more times, his ending fluency rate was 70 cwpm.

Notice what happens the following week (see March 9 column). Kevin is now reading a new Practice Passage. However, his beginning fluency rate has increased by five words (from 60 to 65 cwpm) when compared to the previous Monday—even though this is a new Practice Passage. As Kevin continued to reread this passage during the second week, his reading rate steadily improved. As Kevin’s reading rate continues to improve and he begins to
approach 80 cwpm, he will most likely be ready to start practicing *Practice Passages* at the third-grade level. Kevin’s expected fluency rate goal would then range from 70 to 110 cwpm.

**Figure 7.1**
Kevin’s Fluency Graph

| Correct Words Per Minute | 120 | 115 | 110 | 105 | 100 | 95 | 90 | 85 | 80 | 75 | 70 | 65 | 60 | 55 | 50 | 45 | 40 | 35 | 30 | 25 | 20 | 15 | 10 | 5 |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| PASSAGE NUMBER           | 203 | 203 | 203 | 203 | 203 | 204 | 204 | 204 | 204 | 204 | 204 | 204 |
Example 2: Sarita
Sarita is reading at a third-grade instructional level and was assigned a third-grade Practice Passage. Based on Table 1.1 (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005) in Chapter 1, the appropriate goal for Sarita is to read 70–110 cwpm.

A glance at Sarita’s Fluency Graph (see Figure 7.2) reveals that she is reading below her expected range. In this case, the teacher decides that he needs to reevaluate whether Sarita has been placed correctly at her instructional level. Based on the reevaluation, the teacher will decide whether or not to: (1) lower the Practice Passage reading level; (2) add practice with the Automatic Word Lists; or (3) incorporate additional instructional strategies such as the ones in the following section, “Helping the Student Who Is Not Making Adequate Progress.” (Refer to the Practice Passages and the Automatic Word Lists—both in the Fluency Building Sheets section—for choosing Automatic Word Lists to use with your students.)

Figure 7.2
Sarita’s Fluency Graph
Example 3: José
José is a fourth-grade student with a fourth-grade instructional reading level. His fluency goal, as shown in Table 1.1 (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2005) in Chapter 1, is 125 cwpm. When José's teacher reviewed his Fluency Graph (see Figure 7.3), she noticed that his reading rate is above his goal rate. She decided to assign fifth-grade Practice Passages to José, which may be more challenging for him.

Figure 7.3
José's Fluency Graph
Helping the Student Who Is Not Making Adequate Progress

If a student is not making progress in the passage fluency and word-building activities in *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate*, the reason may be is that the assigned *Practice Passages* do not match the student’s instructional reading level. A student must be placed at the correct instructional reading level in order to make the expected progress. When students practice fluency at their correct instructional levels, the vast majority of them make excellent progress. However, if after examining a student’s *Fluency Graph* or *Fluency Record* you determine that little progress has been made in two or more weeks, consider the following:

- If a student reads fewer than 40 cwpm, an intensive comprehensive reading program should be used instead of, or in addition to, *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate*. A student who does not read more than 40 cwpm needs explicit instruction in underlying reading skills before reading fluency can be developed.

- Read the *Practice Passage* with the student to ascertain if he/she has been placed at the correct instructional reading level. The student should be able to correctly read approximately 95 percent of the words when reading at the appropriate instructional reading level. Note the errors the student is making. Perhaps many of the words the student is having difficulty with are high-frequency sight words. In this case, the student is likely to benefit from additional practice using the *Automatic Word Lists*. These lists contain sets of the most commonly encountered (i.e., high-frequency) words in the written English language.

- If you observe that a student is having great difficulty reading an assigned *Practice Passage*, select another one that is one grade level below. If the student reads less than 95 percent of the words correctly in the new passage, have him/her read a *Practice Passage* at an even lower reading level.

- A student’s reading fluency problems may be associated with poor decoding skills. Assess whether the student would benefit from extra instruction in decoding.

- When students are first presented with new *Practice Passages*, make a point of meeting with the partnerships of struggling readers to ensure that they are demonstrating adequate accuracy. Consistently and carefully monitor partnerships of struggling readers throughout the week.

- A stronger reader may be paired with a struggling reader as a practice partner. The stronger reader reads the *Practice Passage* while the struggling reader follows closely behind, echoing the words of the stronger reader. The struggling reader will gain additional reading strength by having the passage read almost simultaneously. Practice partnership sessions should take place in addition to the regular *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* sessions.

- Give fluency partners extra untimed reading-practice opportunities. Partners can whisper-read to each other, thus gaining additional rereadings of the same *Practice Passage* before taking their formal one-minute timings. Whisper-reading will help to build the confidence of struggling readers before their actual word counts are recorded.
Fluency partners may also “ping-pong read” sentences back and forth to each other as another form of practice. This practice will also help students gain confidence and familiarity with the Practice Passage prior to the formal fluency timing.
Comprehension and Summary Writing Strategies

Comprehension strategies (e.g., summarizing and paraphrasing) and the use of graphic organizers can be taught and practiced using the Practice Passages in Six-Minute Solution Intermediate. We recommend that students be taught comprehension strategies and how to use graphic organizers directly through modeling and guided practice, bolstered by independent practice. Oral activities can easily be extended into a mini-lesson on how to take notes on expository material using the indentation note-taking strategy as described in the Skills for School Success Series (Archer & Gleason, 2002). Examples of effective comprehension strategies for nonfiction include:

- Summarizing
- Paraphrasing
- Retelling
- Describing
- Learning expository text structure

Summarizing

One method of improving students’ comprehension skills is to teach summarizing. First, model summarizing by pausing after reading aloud each paragraph of a Practice Passage from an overhead transparency. Then, “think aloud” while you determine the main idea of each paragraph, limiting the number of words you use to summarize. Counting the words as they are spoken is a powerful way to illustrate this point. Another effective way to teach summarizing is to use “paragraph-shrinking” techniques (Fuchs, Fuchs, Kazlan, & Allen, 1999).

Once you have modeled oral summarizing, you can assign student partners alternate paragraphs from their Practice Passage to orally summarize. Then, have the partners practice orally summarizing the whole passage. With additional instruction, this oral summarization practice can be extended to summary writing. After students complete their oral summarizations, ask them to turn over the Practice Passage and write a short summary of it.

Paraphrasing

To model paraphrasing, read aloud a Practice Passage—paragraph by paragraph—from an overhead transparency. After reading each paragraph, stop and announce, “I can put the information in this paragraph into my own words by saying .... ” Point out to students that it is easier to learn new information when you put it into your own words instead of trying to remember the text’s language.

After modeling, have student partners paraphrase alternate paragraphs of their Practice Passage. Another effective method for teaching paraphrasing is the “read-cover-recite-check” strategy from the Skills for School Success Series (Archer & Gleason, 2002).

Retelling

Read aloud a Practice Passage from an overhead transparency. Then, model a brief retelling of the passage, using the main ideas of the paragraphs to formulate the retelling. By using phrases such as “The passage began with ...,”
“Next, I read ... ,” and “Then I learned ... ,” you can effectively model retelling of information.

**Describing**
You can model describing by listing the characteristics, features, and examples of a topic. As you model, include key vocabulary words and phrases generally found in descriptive texts such as “for example,” “characteristics,” “for instance,” “such as,” and “to illustrate.” You may use a spider-web graphic organizer (as in Figure 8.1) in which the topic of the passage is listed in a circle in the center and the features are written on lines extending out from the circle, forming a web.

Students can take turns orally describing their *Practice Passage* paragraphs to their partners while the partners take notes on the passage.

![Figure 8.1 Spider-Web Graphic Organizer](image)

**Learning Expository Text Structure**
Students can be taught about how text is structured using the following methods:

- Sequencing
- Comparing
- Analyzing cause and effect
- Problem solving
Sequencing
Some of the Practice Passages list items or events in numerical or chronological order, or in sequences. When teaching students a comprehension strategy for this type of passage, call attention to key vocabulary words such as “first,” “second,” “third,” “next,” “then,” “finally,” “yesterday,” “today,” “now,” “later,” “before,” and “after.” Extend this sequencing comprehension activity to include writing by using a graphic organizer to list information sequentially (see Figure 8.2).

**Figure 8.2**
Sequencing Graphic Organizer
Comparing
Some of the Practice Passages explain how two or more things are alike or different. Call attention to key vocabulary words and phrases in these passages such as "alike," "same as," "different from," "in contrast," "on the other hand," "but," "yet," "however," "although," "opposite of," "as well as," "while," and "unless." Venn diagrams are excellent graphic organizers to use for showing the similarities and differences in comparison text. A Venn diagram consists of two or more overlapping circles (see Figure 8.3).

![Figure 8.3](image)

Venn Diagram

Analyzing Cause and Effect
Another type of expository text structure lists one or more causes and the resulting effect(s). Key vocabulary words and phrases for this type of text include "consequently," "because," "if ... then," "thus," "since," "nevertheless," "accordingly," "because of," "as a result of," "may be due to," "therefore," and "this led to." A graphic organizer may be used to illustrate cause and effect (see Figure 8.4).

![Figure 8.4](image)

Cause and Effect Graphic Organizer

The Six-Minute Solution: A Reading Fluency Program (Intermediate Level)
**Problem-Solving**
This type of expository text structure states a problem and lists one or more solutions. Key vocabulary words and phrases include “the problem is,” “the question is,” “furthermore,” “one reason for,” “a solution,” and “another possibility.” An example of a graphic organizer for problem-solving text is shown in Figure 8.5.

**Figure 8.5**
Problem-Solving Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solutions:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary Writing Strategies**
Teachers may elect to incorporate summary writing strategies into the *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* fluency model. In that case, on the last day of fluency practice, partners write a short summary of the assigned Practice Passage. It is recommended that teachers demonstrate summary writing with a Practice Passage at a readability level that matches that of the lowest reader in the class.

**Materials:**
- A copy of the demonstration Practice Passage for each student.
- A copy of Summary Paragraph Frame 1 or Summary Paragraph Frame 2 (see Appendix) for each student.
- An overhead transparency of the demonstration Practice Passage.
- An overhead transparency of Summary Paragraph Frame 1 or Summary Paragraph Frame 2.
- A transparency writing pen.

**Procedure:**
1. Distribute copies of the demonstration Practice Passage and Summary Paragraph Frame 1 or Summary Paragraph Frame 2 to students.
2. Introduce the summary paragraph frame and discuss the components of the frame.
3. Read the demonstration Practice Passage together with students.
4. Model filling in the components of the paragraph frame by thinking aloud.
5. Have students follow along and fill in their paragraph frame.
6. Using the completed paragraph frame, join students in writing summary paragraphs.
Summary Paragraph Frame 1

This passage was about __________. First, I learned __________. Next, I learned __________. Finally, I learned __________.

Summary Paragraph Frame 2

Topic sentence (name the “who” or the “what”). Tell the most important thing about the “who” or the “what.”

Example:

__________ is/was __________. One important fact is __________. Another important fact is __________. A final important fact is __________.
Conclusion: More Than Six Minutes a Day

One of the advantages of the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate fluency partner model is that students are able to increase their oral reading fluency in only six minutes of an instructional period. This curriculum’s original grouping configuration is a partnership match based on instructional reading and fluency levels. By utilizing this configuration, the partnership is self-supporting—each partner’s reading level and cwpm score mirror the other partner’s. In this way, partnerships can function independently with little supervision.

However, there might be times when more than six minutes a day must be devoted to fluency practice, as in the following situations:

- On the first day of the week—when partnerships receive a new Practice Passage—more time will be required. Each student in the partnership silently reads the entire new Practice Passage. If any words are unknown, students consult first with their partners. If neither partner knows a word, the teacher supplies the correct pronunciation.

- Although the program can be easily implemented in a class of struggling readers, an individual fluency program may be more appropriate for some students. In these cases, additional time will be needed for fluency practice.

- Certain grouping configurations, such as guided reading groups, require more than six minutes a day.

- Incorporating additional comprehension activities and/or summary writing will require additional time.

The Six-Minute Solution Intermediate partnership fluency model works well if partners can be fairly evenly matched. However, some educational settings do not lend themselves to the partnership fluency model. If instructional levels of students are very diverse, it would not be appropriate to assign fluency partners.

Keep in mind that fluency practice is essential for all struggling readers. If a particular setting does not lend itself to the partnership model, Six-Minute Solution Intermediate may be adjusted to become an individualized fluency program. Refer to the “Individual Fluency Programs” section of Chapter 2 for two individual fluency program options. As an individualized fluency program, the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate model may instead become the Sixteen-Minute Solution Intermediate model. However, the benefits of daily fluency practice will more than compensate for the additional time required.
Assessments
Using the *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate* Assessment Passages

The six *Assessment Passages* included in *Six-Minute Solution Intermediate*—Levels 1–6 for first grade to sixth grade—were designed to serve several purposes, and they may be used in a variety of ways. Refer to *Chapter 1: Assessments* for additional information.

**Using Assessment Passages to Assess Correct Words Per Minute (cwpm) and to Form Student Partnerships**

1. **Select the *Assessment Passage* that matches the current grade level of the students being assessed.** For example, all students in a sixth-grade language arts class should be assessed on the same Level 6 *Assessment Passage*. The reading of *Assessment Passages* should be unpracticed, meaning that students should not silently read the passage before the fluency assessment is conducted. In the case of remedial or special education students who read significantly below their chronological grade level, select an *Assessment Passage* that is closer to their instructional level. For example, in a special education classroom for grades 4, 5, and 6 in which the majority of students read at the second-grade level, use the Level 2 *Assessment Passage* for assessment. **Note:** All students must read the same *Assessment Passage* so that partnerships may be evenly assigned. However, partnerships will read *Practice Passages* at their independent or instructional level.

2. **Make two copies of the selected *Assessment Passage*, and laminate them or insert them into plastic sleeves.** The assessor uses one copy to mark reading errors and stopping point with an erasable marking pen, and students read from the other copy. Tell students that they will be asked to individually read the selected *Assessment Passage* quickly and carefully for one minute.

3. **Set a timer for one minute, and tell the student to begin reading when he/she is ready.** Avoid saying, “Get ready, get set, go!” Rather, start the timer when the student begins reading. Mark the reading errors the student makes and supply any words the student can’t read after a 3-second wait time. Mark any words supplied by you as errors. Student insertions and self-corrections are not counted as errors.

4. **At the end of one minute, stop the student, and mark the last word read.** Subtract the number of reading errors from the total number of words read to compute the correct words per minute (cwpm) rate for the student. Then, transfer the student’s cwpm score to an *Initial Assessment Record* (see Appendix). Wipe off the markings on your copy of the *Assessment Passage*, and continue the one-minute timing procedure with the next student.

5. **To form fluency partnerships,** match each student’s cwpm rate to within 10–15 words per minute of another student, with both students reading at the same-grade instructional level.
Using Assessment Passages to Assess Reading Instructional Level

Assessment Passages may also be used to ascertain a student’s reading level on that particular grade-level’s passage. Again, this should be an unpracticed reading for which the student has no opportunity to read before the assessment begins. Note: Since the rationale for this type of assessment is determining accuracy—not fluency—it is untimed.

The Determining Reading Levels Chart (see Chapter 1) should be referenced to decide whether or not students are reading the Assessment Passage at the independent level, instructional level, or frustration level. The independent level is the one at which a student can read a passage easily and without teacher assistance or instruction. The instructional level is the one at which a student can read a passage, but some teacher guidance and instruction are necessary for comprehension. The instructional level is the most important one to determine, since it is at this level that learning truly occurs. The frustration level is the one at which a student struggles to read a passage and little, if any, learning will occur.

In matching students for fluency partnerships, both students should be able to read the same grade-level Assessment Passage at an instructional level. Conduct the assessments as directed in steps 1-4 in the previous section, but do not time students. After each student reads the Assessment Passage, use the Determining Reading Levels Chart in Chapter 1 to establish his/her reading level of the passage. Note: If it is quite apparent that the Assessment Passage is too difficult for a student to read, and the student is at his/her frustration level, stop the assessment immediately. Select a Assessment Passage that is at least two grade levels below the current passage, and begin the assessment again.

Using Assessment Passages for Pretest and Posttest Data Collection

Assessment Passages can be used as well to document fluency progress over time after conducting the Six-Minute Solution Intermediate program. Select the same Assessment Passage you used for the original baseline data collection, and have the initial fluency scores available for comparison. (This information would appear on the Initial Assessment Record.)

Conduct the one-minute timing assessment with individual students in the usual manner, and calculate their cwpm scores. Subtract the original cwpm from the new cwpm to determine the number of words gained per minute resulting from fluency practice. Share this reading progress with the student and the parents, using the Fluency Assessment Report (see Appendix).

Using Assessment Passages to Determine Progress in Reading Level for Making Instructional Decisions

Finally, Assessment Passages may be used not only to determine student progress in reading fluency but also to document reading level gains.

If a student’s Fluency Graph confirms that he/she is reading consistently at or above grade-level, select the next level Assessment Passage and conduct an unpracticed fluency assessment. Use the Determining Reading Levels Chart in Chapter 1 to ascertain an increase in the student’s instructional reading level. If it has increased, assign a Assessment Passage at the new level.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Passage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Birds: Our Feathered Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fish Facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reptiles: Cold-Blooded Animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Marsupials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Insects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mammals: The Highest Animal Class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are thousands of different birds. Birds have two legs and two wings. Some birds are very small. Others are large. Birds are the only animals that have feathers. Feathers can be any color. They keep birds warm and dry. Flight feathers are very smooth.

Most birds can fly. Birds can fly because they have very light bones. Their strong muscles move the wings. The tail helps the bird to steer in the sky. Different birds have different shaped wings. This is because birds live in different places. Most birds live in trees. Other birds live high in the hills. Some live on the ground. Some birds fly long distances. They live one place in the summer. They live someplace else in the winter.

Some birds cannot fly. They are too big. The biggest bird is an ostrich. It can grow to be 8 feet tall and can weigh 300 pounds.

An ostrich has strong legs. It can run very fast. Some birds are good swimmers. Penguins are birds that can swim. They can swim very fast.

They use their wings to swim.
Fish Facts

There are many kinds of fish. They come in many colors, shapes, and sizes. Some fish are as small as tadpoles. Others are larger than crocodiles. Some fish are thin, while others are fat.

All fish have three important things in common. They all live in water. All fish have fins to control the direction of their movement. They all use gills to get oxygen from the water.

Some fish live in the ocean. They are saltwater fish. Other fish live in rivers and lakes. These fish are freshwater fish.

Fish are good swimmers. They propel themselves through the water by moving their tails from side to side. Fish use their fins to steer. Some fish have only one fin. But most fish have more than one fin.

Gills are water-breathing organs. They are located in the fish's mouth. The fish takes in water through its mouth. The water goes through gill slits. These help the fish to get oxygen from the water as it passes through.
Reptiles: Cold-Blooded Animals

Reptiles have lived on earth for a long time. They have been here for more than 300 million years. Reptiles are animals. They are cold-blooded. This means that their body temperature changes. When it is cold outside, reptiles are cold. When it is hot outside, reptiles are hot. Reptiles eat 30 to 50 times less food than mammals. This is because they do not have to burn fuel for energy. Reptiles have dry, scaly skin. Their skin protects them from drying out.

There are many kinds of reptiles. More than 8,000 types of reptiles live on earth. Reptiles live all over the world. Some reptiles live on land. Others live in the water. Living reptiles fall into four classes. Turtles are one class of reptiles. They are reptiles with a shell. Turtles are the oldest living reptile group. Crocodiles are another class of reptiles. Alligators are included in this group. Lizards are a type of reptile. Snakes are reptiles, too.
A marsupial is a type of mammal. Unlike other mammals, marsupials have pouches. They carry their babies in their pouches. Most of the marsupials in the world live in Australia.

Kangaroos are marsupials. They have strong back legs and can jump long distances. Kangaroos have strong tails. Their tail is used for balance. The red kangaroo can grow to be about seven feet tall. They can weigh more than 200 pounds. They move fast. Sometimes, they travel at 40 miles per hour.

Another Australian marsupial is the koala bear. The koalas live in trees. They have thick, gray fur, a black nose, and no tail. Koalas look very cuddly. They eat only leaves from a gum tree. The leaves are juicy. Koalas do not drink water.

Wombats are also marsupials. They are Australian rodents.

Wombats live in holes in the ground. They sleep during the day and come out at night. Wombats' diet consists of grass and plant roots.

Opossums are the only marsupials that live outside Australia.

Opossums look like large rats. They have long faces and tails. Opossums eat eggs, fruit, insects, and small animals. When they are scared, they fall to the ground and pretend to be dead. This is how the term "playing possum" originated.
Insects

Insects belong to a huge group of animals. This group is called arthropods. All arthropods have a hard outer coat called an exoskeleton.

This exoskeleton protects the soft insides of an arthropod’s body.

An adult insect’s body is divided into three sections: a head, a thorax, and an abdomen. The insect’s head contains mouthparts, eyes, and antennae. The thorax is the middle part of an insect’s body. Three pairs of jointed legs are found on the thorax. Insects have six legs. Two pairs of wings are also attached to the thorax. The abdomen is the bottom part of an insect. It is the biggest part of the body.

Most insects undergo a change. This change is called a metamorphosis. The metamorphosis has four stages: egg, larva, pupa, and adult. Most insects lay eggs. Each egg then turns into a larva. After several molts, the larva enters the pupa stage. During this stage, it does not eat or move. When the pupa stage ends, the adult insect emerges.

There are thousands of insects in the world. More than 900,000 kinds have been found. That is more than three times as many other animal types put together. Many more new insects are discovered every year.
Mammals: The Highest Animal Class

Mammals are the highest class of animals. There are about 5,000 living mammal species. Mammals have several characteristics in common. All mammals are warm-blooded. That means that their body temperature remains constant regardless of the temperature of their environment. The majority of all mammals have bodies partially or wholly covered with hair. Most female mammals give birth to live young. They nourish their offspring with milk secreted by mammary glands.

Mammals have hearts with four chambers. They have three middle-ear bones: the malleus, incus, and stapes.

Mammals have four kinds of diets. Herbivores are plant-eaters. This group includes beavers, cows, horses, and pandas. Carnivores are meat-eaters. Whales, dolphins, dogs, tigers, and lions fall into this group. Omnivores eat plants and meat. Humans, raccoons, and some bears fall into this category. Insectivores eat insects. Aardvarks and anteaters are examples of insectivores.

There are many different kinds of mammals. The blue whale is the largest of all mammals. African elephants are the largest land mammals. In terms of speed, the cheetah is the fastest mammal, while the sloth is the slowest. The giraffe is the tallest mammal. Pygmy shrews and bumblebee bats are the smallest mammals. The striped skunk is the smelliest mammal of all.
**San Diego Quick Assessment of Reading Ability**

**Directions:** This is an individually administered sight-word reading assessment. Because this is a measure of sight-word knowledge, students need to recognize the words very quickly. Give a copy of the Student Form to the student to read. Choose a word list that is two to three grade levels below the student's current grade level as the starting point. Ask the student to read each word aloud. Keep the student moving down the lists. Do not allow more than three to five seconds on any word. Rather, tell the student to go on to the next word. Mark the word skipped as incorrect. Stop the assessment when the student has missed three or more words in a list. Record the highest grade level for each of the three levels (independent, instructional, and frustration) in the Errors & Reading Levels table when testing is completed.
# ERRORS & READING LEVELS

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<th>Student Name</th>
<th>Reading Level</th>
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Record the highest grade level for each:

INDEPENDENT _____ INSTRUCTIONAL _____ FRUSTRATION _____

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<th>Grade Seven</th>
<th>Grade Eleven</th>
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<td>wrestler</td>
<td>superannuate</td>
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<td>drew</td>
<td>enumerate</td>
<td>luxuriate</td>
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From "The Graded Word List: Quick Gauge of Reading Ability" by Margaret LaPray, Helen Ross, and Raman Royal, in *Journal of Reading*, 12, 305-307 (January, 1969). Copyright © by International Reading Association. All rights reserved, Reprinted with permission.
<table>
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<tr>
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Fluency Building Sheets
Level 1 Practice Passages

101 All About Plants
102 Mexican Hat Dance
103 Cat Families: It's All Relative
104 Rome Becomes an Empire
105 Flying Fish
106 Railroads in the West
107 Trees: Our Helpers
108 The Moon: Earth's Natural Satellite
109 Stars and Stripes: The First American Flag
110 Gifts from the Ancient Greeks
111 The Roaring '20s: The Age of Jazz
112 Hawaiian Islands
113 Oil: Black Gold
114 The Sun and Energy
115 Plants Are Alike and Different, Too!
116 Gold Rush in California
117 The Nile River in Ancient Egypt
118 Log Cabins: Pioneer Homes
119 Eli Whitney and the Cotton Gin
120 Alex Haley: Author
121 Earth: Hometown Planet
122 Bruce Lee: Martial Arts Actor
123 Nat King Cole: Unforgettable Singer
124 The Secret of Silk
125 Native American Homes
There are many plants on our earth. Plants can be big. Plants can be small. We can’t even see some plants. They are too small. Plants need many things to grow. They need sunlight. Other plants need a lot of sunlight. Others need very little sunlight. Plants also need water to grow. Just like sunlight, some plants need a lot of water. Other plants need very little water. A cactus can live without a lot of water.

Plants also need food from the soil to grow. Plants use their roots to get food and water from the soil. The roots also hold up the plant. The leaves make food for the plant. They use the sun to make food. Stems are different on plants. The stem holds up the leaves and flowers on the plant. It also carries water and food to the plant. The stem of a tree is hard and strong. The stem of a flower can bend easily. Plants have seeds to grow new plants. Some seeds are very small. Other seeds are in fruit that grow on the plants. Some plants have flowers. Other plants do not have flowers. Plants give us many things. They are good to us.
A fiesta is a party. People dress up to go to a fiesta. They wear bright colors. Many people dance at fiestas. One dance is the Mexican Hat Dance. It is a lot of fun. A big hat is put on the floor. It is a sombrero. It is made of straw. It has a wide brim.

People dance around the hat. Each person has a partner. Partners face each other. They hold hands. Each person jumps and taps their right heel in front. Then they jump and tap their left heel in front. They clap two times. Partners hook right elbows. They swing each other in a circle. Then they change directions. The dance is repeated until the music stops.
Cat Families: It's All Relative

Did you know that all cats are related? Small house cats and wild lions belong to the same family. They have a lot of things in common. For example, all cats have long claws. They use these claws to grip and tear. Cats keep their claws sharp by scraping them on rough things like tree trunks. Pet owners give house cats scratching posts to use. All cats walk on their toes. Their heels do not touch the ground. Cats have five toes on each front foot. But their back feet only have four toes. Small pads on cats' feet help them to move quietly. Most cats hunt at night. They have a good sense of smell, sharp hearing, and can see well at night. Cats are graceful animals. They are able to climb and balance themselves very well. Cats are able to run quickly and make great leaps.

Cats that live in homes are called house cats. Cats are not as friendly as dogs. But they are neat and need less care than dogs. There are two kinds of house cats. One kind has long hair and the other has short hair. Pet cats should be given a warm, dry box for sleeping. They need two or three meals each day.

House cats make very good pets for some people.
The Romans wanted a big empire. The army was very big. Soldiers signed up for twenty years. Each soldier did the job well. Some were archers. There were spear throwers. Others were horse riders. The army had many parts. Each part was called a legion. A legion had six thousand men. There were nurses, cooks, and arrow makers. Often there were long battles. They did not need to return to Rome for supplies.

The Romans built roads. This helped them to control the empire. There were more than fifty thousand miles of roads. The roads were built to last. The roads had three layers. First, the men dug the road. The bed of the road was filled with rocks. They mixed gravel and concrete. This was put on the rocks. Flat paving stones were on top. Stone curbs were on each side. They dug drainage ditches. There was a ditch on each side of the road. Many people used the roads. Farmers used the roads for trade. The army used the roads to get places fast.

The Romans wanted to keep the empire. The empire spread to many places. It was very big.
Did you know that some fish can fly? It is true! They do not really fly like birds. But some fish can glide through the air. These fish are called flying fish. They have long fins on either side of their bodies. When a flying fish leaves the water, it spreads its fins. The air catches under the fins. The air under the fins helps the fish glide. Flying fish can glide at speeds of 40 miles per hour. They can go as far as 30 meters before they splash down.

The flying fish also has a special tail. Its tail is in two parts. Each part of its tail can move very fast. Those two tail parts help the flying fish to swim very fast. The tail also helps to propel the fish out of the water. You may ask yourself, “Why would a fish want to fly?” The reason is that the flying fish is trying to get away from a bigger fish. When a flying fish is being chased, it swims fast to the top of the water. Then it leaps out of the water. As it leaps, the flying fish spreads its fins and glides away from danger.
Before railroads, it took a long time to go from New York to San Diego. Most people used a horse and wagon to cross the U.S. Some people sailed around Cape Horn. Either way, it took three months. People wanted to travel faster.

The U.S. had no money to build the train tracks. So the U.S. gave two groups land. Right-of-way land was for the train tracks. The U.S. also gave large pieces of land for every mile of track that was laid. This land could be sold. The groups sold some of the land. The groups used the money to buy materials. Workers had to be paid.

The Union Pacific group started in Nebraska. They laid the tracks toward the west. The Central Pacific group began on the West Coast. They laid the tracks to the east.

Both groups worked hard. They had to cross rivers. Bridges were built. There were tall mountains. The men had to dig tunnels. It was not easy work. The tracks met in Utah. The last spike was made of gold. A silver hammer was used. The track was finished.

Now people could cross the U.S. in one week. More people moved to the West.

Total Words Read ____
- Errors ____
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Trees help all of us. Trees give us wood. We use the wood to build our houses. We have doors on our houses made from wood. The chairs we sit on are made from wood. Our houses have many things made from wood. Trees keep us dry if it is raining. Trees also keep us cool in the shade with their leaves.

Paper is made from trees. Many other things come from trees. Fruits such as apples and oranges grow on trees. Cherries and peaches come from trees, too. Walnuts and almonds grow on trees. Maple syrup for pancakes comes from maple trees. Birds live in trees. Many animals also live in trees.

Trees help us when we are sick. Many medicines are made from trees. When trees die, they still help us. They help to make new soil for seeds to grow. They also become homes for animals such as rabbits. Bees put their hives in fallen trees. Trees help the earth, too. The tree’s leaves work with the sun to make oxygen. Without oxygen, we could not live.

Trees are very important to us. Trees help us all in many, many ways. We should take care of our trees because they take care of us.
On a clear night, the moon can be seen. The moon is a bright object in the sky. Only the sun is brighter. The moon is thousands of miles away. The moon is much smaller than the earth. The moon travels around the earth. It takes about 27 days to make one orbit. Each night it is in a different place in its trip around the earth. More or less light from the sun gets to the moon. The moon reflects sunlight. Each night the moon looks different. Sometimes it looks like a big ball. Other nights it looks like a thin light. Sometimes there is no moon at all. It is a full moon when the entire surface of the moon facing the sun reflects sunlight.

The moon is not like the earth. No one lives on the moon. It is very rocky. There are no plants or animals. During the day it is very hot. Sometimes it is two hundred degrees. At night, it is very cold. It can be 250 degrees below zero.

Men have visited the moon. They had to wear space suits. They did not stay long. They put up a U.S. flag. Moon rocks were brought back to Earth. There is not much on the moon. People have always enjoyed looking at the moon at night. They probably always will.
Stars and Stripes: The First American Flag

It is said that Betsy Ross made the first U.S. flag. It was called the Stars and Stripes. It had thirteen rows of stripes. The top row was red. The next row was white. The next row was red and so on. In the top left was a field of blue. There were thirteen stars. Each star had five points. One point was upward. They were arranged in a circle. At that time, there were thirteen colonies. Each star was for a colony. The first flag was raised on July 1, 1776.

When the U.S. became a nation, the stars stood for each state. As the U.S. grew, a star was added for each state. At first, a stripe was also added. One time the flag had fifteen stripes and fifteen stars. Then the U.S. decided to keep the thirteen stripes. The stripes were for the thirteen colonies. When a state joined the U.S., a new star was added. The order of the stars was changed many times. Hawaii became a state in 1959. The last star was added for Hawaii.

Now there are fifty stars on the flag. The flag still has thirteen stripes. If another state joined the U.S., a star would be added.
Gifts from the Ancient Greeks

The ancient Greeks lived close to the sea. Many lived on islands. The farmers grew crops all year. The winters were mild. It was sunny in the summer. They grew grapes, olives, wheat, and barley. The Greeks had many ships. They traded with others. To make it easy, they used coins. The coins were made of gold and silver.

The Greeks had city-states. There was no king. The power was in the hands of the citizens. There were rich and poor people. The men citizens voted. They made the rules. When someone broke a rule, they had a trial. The people served on juries. Most people lived in the city. Some farmed land around the city. Sometimes they had wars. The wars were over land. Some people moved. They made new city-states.

The Greeks liked to have fun. They also wanted to honor their gods. Every four years they had sports events. There were foot races and wrestling. They threw discs. The sports events were called the Olympics. Two times each year they went to plays. The dramas were very good. The plays told stories about gods and history. Most of the plays were very sad. A few were very funny. They were always sad at the end. A jury voted for the best play.

The Greeks had many good ideas. Many movies are based on their stories. The name and dates are changed. People like to go to sports events. Coins are used to buy and sell things. Citizens vote and make rules.

Total Words Read ______
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The Roaring '20s: The Age of Jazz

After World War I, the U.S. was ready for change. People started to change in the way they did things. They wanted to find new ways to express themselves. Music was one way to enjoy life. The music that most people in the U.S. liked was jazz. They saw jazz as a way to break away from old rules. It was a way to be free.

Black people in the U.S. created jazz. It started in New Orleans. It grew out of music called the blues. The blues was based on the hard life of most blacks. The music told sad stories. It helped people cope with hard times. Most of the black people who played jazz had no formal schooling in music. Yet, they were great performers.

There was no right way to play jazz. It was about how people felt. It was based on a theme or musical idea. The players chased a tune up and down the scales as they played. This gave the player a sense of being free.

At the same time, young women wanted to be free of old ideas. They cast out long, full dresses. They put on short skirts. They had loose-fitting clothes. The young women cut their hair short. Women wore makeup. They danced to jazz music. These women were called “flappers.”

Today women wear clothes they like. They cut their hair many ways. People still like to listen to jazz.
Hawaiian Islands

Captain Cook was the first white man to visit Hawaii. He landed in the islands in 1778. The islands were very pretty. There was sun every day. Palm trees grew there. There were flowers all year. Ships going to and from Asia stopped in the islands. Sometimes sailors jumped ship. They did not want to leave.

A king ruled Hawaii. Farmers from the U.S. moved to the islands. They grew pineapples and sugar. The king let the U.S. build a navy base. The king died. His sister became the queen. She was removed from the throne. The islands became part of the U.S. The navy base grew larger. More people moved to the islands. Hawaii became a state in 1959.

Many people like to visit the islands. They come by plane and ship. The sun shines all year. There are lots of palm trees and flowers. Birds live in the trees. The birds sing all of the time. People like to play in the sun. They swim in the sea. A few like to surf. Many people play golf. Some like to hike in the hills. Most like to listen to the music and watch the dances. The islands are fun to visit.
Oil: Black Gold

Oil is sometimes called “black gold.” Oil is used for many things. It is worth a lot of money. Oil made some people very rich. At one time oil was not worth much. People did not like oil on their land. It was dirty. Oil smelled bad. Plants did not grow well near oil. That was two hundred years ago.

The first oil well was in Pennsylvania. People used oil as a medicine. This did not work well. Oil was also used to grease metal parts. This made machines run smoother. When oil is heated, dirt and grime go to the bottom. The oil at the top is called refined oil. People found uses for refined oil. It was used for lamps and stoves. Oil was sold in the grocery stores and door-to-door. People did not need to make candles or buy whale oil. Gasoline is high-grade refined oil. About one hundred years ago, people started to use gas for cars. Oil was found in the West. People started to search for oil. They drilled wells. At first oil was shipped east in barrels. Then they used railroad tank cars. Finally, pipelines were laid. Oil is also shipped in big oil tankers.

Today there are many uses for oil. It is used to heat houses, for fuel, and as a cleaner. Now people would like to find oil on their land. They would be very rich.
The Sun and Energy

The sun is a star. It is a star like the thousands of stars seen at night. The sun is the closest star to earth. It is 93 million miles away. The sun is at the center of the solar system. It is much bigger than the earth. It is made of gas. The gas is on fire. In the center, there are many explosions. The sun is hotter than hot. The heat causes a lot of light. It takes about eight minutes for light to go from the sun to the earth.

Animals and plants need the energy that comes from the sunlight. Light from the sun gives us energy. Plants need sunlight to grow. Trees grow tall. People cut down trees for the wood. When wood is burned, energy is released. Bugs and animals eat the plants. People eat plants and animals to give them energy. Some plants and animals die. They stay in the ground for millions of years. After a while, they turn into oil. Oil is used to run cars and trucks. The heat from the sun warms the air near the ground. The air gets warm and rises. This causes wind. Wind is a form of energy. The sunlight gives us many forms of energy.
Plants Are Alike and Different, Too!

There are so many plants on our earth. When we look at them, they all seem so different from one another. Yet, all of these very different plants are alike in some ways.

All plants need air, water, light, and minerals. Plants are alike in other ways, too. All plants have some sort of roots. Some roots may be close to the soil’s surface. Some roots may go deeply down into the earth. Some roots may even grow on top of the soil. But all plants have roots.

All plants have stems. The stems may look different from one another. They may be short and narrow. They may be tall and thick. There may be many stems on a plant, or very few stems. The stems on trees are hard. The stems on roses have sharp thorns and are narrow. The stems on daisies are short and bend easily. The stems are a part of all plants. They may be different, but all plants have stems.

All plants have leaves. The leaves, just like the stems and roots, are different from one another. Some leaves are large, like those on palm trees. Some leaves are small and narrow. The spines on a cactus are its leaves. The pine needles on a pine tree are its leaves. Just like roots and stems, all plants have leaves, but they are very different from one another.
Gold Rush in California

In 1848, gold was found in California. It was found in a river. People wanted to be rich. They wanted to find gold. Most of the people lived in the East. People wanted to move west. They wanted to be the first to get gold. There was a rush to find gold. Some people put everything in wagons. Horses and oxen pulled the wagons. It was hard to travel in wagons. It was a long trip. They had to cross rivers. The deserts had no water. The mountains were tall. It took three months to get to the gold fields. Some people came by ship. The ships sailed around Cape Horn. Everyone wanted to get rich.

By 1850, many people lived in the West. People looked for gold in the rivers. Some people dug mines. Mines were in the mountains and in the deserts. A few people found gold. Some people opened stores. They sold things to the miners. Some storeowners became very rich. Some people farmed. They sold their goods to the miners. Soon there was not much gold left. People found other jobs. Most people liked the West. They liked the sunshine. They did not move back East.
The Nile River in Ancient Egypt

0 The Nile River is in Egypt. It is the longest river in the world.

14 The Nile is four thousand miles long. The river flows north. Egypt gets

27 almost no rain. On both sides of the river, there is a desert. There are tall

43 mountains in Central Africa. This is where the river begins. Each year it

56 rains and the snow melts. The level of the Nile rises.

67 A long time ago, there were no dams on the Nile. Each year, the

81 level of the Nile rose. The water flowed over the banks of the river. There

96 were big floods. Black river mud covered the land. The mud was good

109 for growing crops. Farmers used the water for crops. They dug ditches to

122 move the water. Little dams were built in the ditches. Farmer saved the

135 water for the crops.

139 The river had many other uses. Boats sailed on the Nile. Animals

151 lived along the river. There were ducks, little birds, and fish. One river

179 plant was useful. Papyrus is reed. It is a tall, thin plant. The plant grows

194 wild by the river. It was used for boats, baskets, and shoes. The plant was

209 cut into thin layers. This made a kind of paper. The Nile River was very

224 useful.

225
Log Cabins: Pioneer Homes

In the U.S., log cabins were home for many people. During the 1700s and the 1800s, many people lived in log cabins. Most of the log cabins were on farms or in the woods. People built log cabins because there were lots of trees.

A log cabin was simple to make. An ax was needed to make a log cabin. The trees were cut down. The logs were notched. Then logs were joined at the corners. The logs are put together to make a square room.

Log cabins were not big. They had one room. A chimney was at one end of the room. The chimney was made of rocks. The rocks were piled up high. Mud was put in the holes between the rocks. A family could make a log cabin in a few days.

Log cabins were not big. They were only as long and wide as tall trees. Some people made the log cabin bigger. They put boards in the rafters. This made a loft. They used ladders to get to the loft. Children slept in the loft. Some people built another log cabin room. Many people liked to live in log cabins.
Eli Whitney and the Cotton Gin

Cotton is an important crop. It grows on a plant in pods. Fluffy white fiber and black seeds are in the pod. It used to be hard to get the seeds off the fiber. In 1793, Eli Whitney made the cotton gin. The gin makes it easy to get the seeds off the fiber.

The cotton gin looks like a box. It is open at the top. There are little slits down one side. Cotton fiber and seeds are placed in the box. There is a roller outside the box. The roller is on one side of the box. Wire teeth are around the roller. People can turn the roller. When the roller is turned the teeth go into the box through the slits. The fiber in the box is caught in the wire teeth. As the teeth come out of the box, they pull fibers out.

The seeds are wider than the slits. The seeds stay in the box. Another roller turns the other way. It takes the fibers from the first roller. The first roller turns back into the box. The first roller gets more fiber. Now it is easy to get the seeds off the fiber.

The cotton fiber is made into thread. The thread is used to make cloth. People like cotton clothes. Cotton clothes are cool in the summer. They are easy to wash. There is a demand for lots of cotton. Many farmers grow cotton.
Alex was born in New York. When he was little, he moved. He lived near his grandmother. She told stories. They were about their family. Alex liked to hear them. One story was about Kunta. Kunta lived in Africa. He came to the U.S. on a slave ship.

When Alex grew up, he went to sea. At sea, he wrote many stories. He tried to sell his stories. At first, no one would buy them. After 8 years, he sold a story.

Alex wanted to know if his family stories were true. So he went to Africa. He talked to many people. The stories were true. Alex wrote about his family. He wrote many stories. It took him 12 years. Alex put the stories together. They became a book. The book was "Roots." It was the story of Alex's roots. People liked the book. Stores sold lots of copies. "Roots" became a TV show. It won many awards. The book made people think. It made them think about their own roots.
Earth: Hometown Planet

The earth is one of the nine planets. It is the third planet from the sun. It is also the fifth largest planet. As far as we know, Earth is the only planet where there is life. There are many reasons for this. Earth is made up of land and water. There is more water than land on Earth. More than half of Earth is water. Humans need water to live. Earth is the only planet where water is in liquid form. That is why there are oceans on Earth. Oceans help keep the temperature stable. The greenhouse effect helps to warm the earth. The earth is not too hot or cold for life. The earth's air has oxygen. The earth's air also has carbon dioxide. Both are important for life.

The earth is four to five billion years old. But the surface of the earth is very young. That means that it has changed often since it was formed. The earth is a very big planet. It is also the densest of all the planets. The earth turns around in a circle. It turns once a day. The earth goes around the sun. When the earth turns to the sun, it is day. When it turns away from the sun, it is night.
Bruce Lee: Martial Arts Actor

Bruce Lee was born in the U.S. in 1940. His family then moved to China. Bruce grew up in Hong Kong. His parents were actors. Bruce also acted in movies. Life in Hong Kong was hard for Bruce. He learned Kung Fu to defend himself.

Bruce moved back to the U.S. when he was 19. He finished high school. Then he went to college. He became a Kung Fu master. Bruce opened a Kung Fu school. Many students came to Bruce’s school. They wanted to learn from the best. Bruce showed them how to do two-finger push-ups. He taught them how to break boards with one kick.

Bruce became famous. He starred on a TV show. He made action movies. People loved to watch his movies. His most famous was “Enter the Dragon.”

Sadly, Bruce did not live long. He died suddenly in 1973. The cause was brain swelling. Bruce had a short life. But his movies keep him alive in the hearts of his fans.
Nat King Cole: Unforgettable Singer

Nat King Cole was born in 1917. He came from a poor family. Nat was one of 13 children. Nat’s father was a minister. His mother taught him to play the piano. Nat played for his father’s church. He was a very good piano player.

When he grew up, he played in a band. The band was the Nat King Cole Trio. They played in small bars. One night, the owner of the bar asked Nat to sing. Nat did not want to sing. But the owner said that he would fire the band if Nat did not sing. So Nat sang a song. Everyone liked how he sang. They liked his deep voice.

Nat became famous. His first hit song was based on one of his father’s sermons. It was “Straighten Up and Fly Right.” Nat was the first black man to have his own radio show. He was also the first black man to have his own TV show.

People loved Nat’s music. He sold many records. Nat became very rich. He bought a fancy home in Los Angeles. Nat did not live to be very old. He was a heavy smoker. This was bad for his health. He died of lung cancer in 1965.

But, Nat’s music lives on today. His daughter Natalie is also a singer. She made a recording. In it, she blended her voice with Nat’s. New tapes of the Nat King Cole Trio were released. People still enjoy listening to Nat’s music.
The Secret of Silk

Silk is strong, beautiful cloth. Silk was first made in China. No one else knew how to make silk. China guarded the secret. For thousands of years people had to buy silk from China. China would not let people come see how silk was made. China traded silk for gold, glass, and goods from the West.

It takes lot of work to make silk. Silkworms are fed mulberry leaves. After five weeks, each worm makes a cocoon. Workers gather the cocoons. They boil water in big pots. The cocoons are put in the hot water. This kills the worms. The hot water softens the cocoons. Workers carefully unwind silk threads. The thread is very long. Each thread is very thin. It can break easily. Thread from many cocoons is twisted together. This makes one strong silk thread. This thread can be twisted with other threads to make it stronger. The thread is washed. Silk is white. Most silk is dyed. There are many different colors of silk thread. The thread is made into cloth.

The silk is used to make many things. Most silk is used to make clothes. Sometimes silk thread is used to make rugs. The rugs are made of knotted silk threads. People like silk because it is beautiful and it lasts a long time.
The first people to live in North America were Native Americans. They lived in groups. Each group was a nation. They lived in many parts of the land. Native Americans built homes based on where they lived.

The Inuit lived in cold places. They lived in the northern part of North America. The Inuit built igloos. They used blocks of ice. The ice was glued together with snow. Igloos were warm inside.

The Cherokee lived in the southeast part of the U.S. Their homes were shaped like a circle. They were made from poles, trees, and mud. The homes had thatch roofs. The Cherokee homes were cool in summer. They were warm in winter.

The Sioux lived on the plains of the U.S. They lived in tents called tipis. Tipis were made with poles. The poles were covered with animal skins. Tipis could be put up or taken down quickly. When the Sioux moved from place to place, they took their tipis with them.
Level 2 Practice Passages

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The Panama Canal: A Sea Path

North and South America are joined by a little piece of land. Before 1900, it was hard to get from the East to the West Coast. Ships had to sail around Cape Horn. It took three months to go from New York to San Diego. People wanted a shorter trip.

The French started to dig a canal. It was hard work. Many workers died of yellow fever. The French gave up. Doctors found a cure for yellow fever. The U.S. made a deal to use the land in Panama. Men started to dig the canal.

It took nine years to make the canal. It is 51 miles long. It goes through two lakes. Workers cut a nine-mile path in the rock. The canal is 300 feet wide. The average depth is 120 feet. The canal was ready for use in 1914. It took a third of the time to sail from the West to the East.

Parts of the canal are above sea level. At one place, it is 85 feet above the sea. How can this be? The canal uses locks to move ships. A lock is a water-filled space. The space is like a big room. There is no roof. The room is made of cement. There is a door on each end of the lock.

One door of the lock opens. The water level is raised. A ship moves into a lock. The other door opens. The ship moves out of the lock. The ship sails into another lock. The water level is raised again. The ship is 85 feet above sea level. The ship sails into the canal. The ship sails into another lock. Water is let out of the lock. The ship is now lower. The canal has three sets of locks.

Today many ships use the canal. The canal is very busy. Ships carry many goods from one coast to the other. People take cruise ships through the canal.
Mars: The Red Planet

Mars is one of the nine planets. It is the fourth planet from the sun. Mars is the seventh largest planet. The planet Mars has a reddish color. So people call it the Red Planet. It was named because of its color. The month of March was named after the planet Mars. Mars was the name of the god of war. The ancient Greeks worshiped Mars. He was also called Ares.

Mars is the closest planet to Earth. When Mars is in the night sky, it can be very bright. Then people can see Mars. They do not even need a telescope.

Many spaceships have visited Mars. The first one to visit was in 1965. The last one was in 1997. The spaceships bring back clues about Mars. People study the clues. They learn about Mars this way.

Mars is a small planet. It is also rocky. Mars is a very cold planet. There is no water on Mars now. But there may have been water at one time. There are clues that lakes or oceans may have been on Mars. People think that there was water a very long time ago. They also think that the water was there for a short time. Some people think that there was life on Mars at one time. No one knows for sure. They must keep studying to find out.
A map is an important tool. It is not hard to learn to read a map. There are four main directions on a map. They are north, east, south, and west. The sun rises in the east. It sets in the west. It is easy to find north and south. Point your right hand to the east. Point your left hand to the west. You will be looking at the north. South will be at the back of your head. On a map, the top is always north. The bottom is always south. The right side is east and the left is west. To help people remember the directions, there is usually a compass on the map with “N,” “E,” “S,” and “W” at each of the four points. Each letter stands for one of the directions.

On a world map, the land is usually brown, yellow, and green. The brown areas stand for mountains. The yellow areas show the deserts. Green is used to show low areas where many plants grow. The water areas are blue. Across the middle is a line. This is the equator. This is not a real line. It is put on the world map to show the middle of the earth, where it is hot. In the north and south it is very cold. These areas are usually white. Sometimes there are red dots on a world map. These usually represent large cities. If there is a very big red dot, the city is very big. If there is a smaller red dot, the city is smaller.

If you know a few simple facts, maps are easy to read. Maps are very useful. People use them to find places and to get information.
Many people like to play baseball. The game started in 1839 in New York. A teacher, Mr. Doubleday, laid out the field. He made up the rules.

At first, players did not wear gloves. They caught the ball with their bare hands. This hurt their hands. In 1875, players started to wear gloves. In the beginning, catchers did not wear masks. Balls would hit them in the face. One catcher made a wire mask. Soon all of the catchers had masks.

Now all players wear gloves. Catchers wear masks. They also wear knee and chest pads.

Most towns had teams. Many boys and men joined the teams. Some teams were very good. People liked to watch teams play the game. They wanted their team to win. Some teams started to pay players. People started to pay money to watch the game. This was in 1868. Soon there were two major baseball leagues. The first World Series was in 1903.

Now baseball is played everywhere. Little boys and girls play on town teams. Baseball is played in schools. Adults play the game for fun. People still like to watch baseball. They pay to watch the pros play. There are still two major leagues. Most big cities have a major league team.

Baseball is a national sport.
Henry Ford: Automobile Manufacturer

Many people think Henry Ford made the first auto. He did not. There were autos since the 1890s. Each auto was made by hand. Only rich people could own one. Mr. Ford had a dream. He wanted to make a car for all the people. Mr. Ford wanted every family to own a car. He wanted to make cars cheaply. Then a family could afford a car.

Mr. Ford made the Model T. It sold for $850. By 1916, he sold the same car for $360. How did he do this? Mr. Ford used mass production. He made many cars. They were all the same. Many workers put the cars together. Each worker did one thing. One worker put on a top. Two workers put on doors. Another put in a seat. The same model was made each year. Year after year, it was the same car. The same car was made for ten years. Everyone knew how to do the job well. There was a joke of the day: You could have a Model T in any color you wanted as long as it was black.

The profit on each car was small. Every family wanted a car. Mr. Ford sold lots of cars. He became very rich. Henry Ford's dream came true. Today many families can have a car. Some families have more than one car.
For thousands of years, it was hard for people to travel. Then came the Model T car. The Model T was cheap. Nearly every family could own the car. A new car cost $360. A used car could be $25 to $50. Cars freed people. Cars let them travel more than ever before. They could live out of town. Men and women could drive to work. Families visited places far from home.

Cars had good and bad effects. Family trips were fun. People liked to go sight-seeing. Often lots of people were in one car. Some people were “back-seat drivers.” Some were good drivers. Some were road hogs. A few were bad drivers. By 1930 cars caused more than half of the accidental deaths in the U.S.

Cars were good for business. Many people made cars. This was good work. Steel was needed to make cars. More rubber was needed for tires. Cars needed oil and gas to run. Gas stations opened all over the U.S. Some people were needed to fix cars. Motels opened for people with cars. Places for tourists to visit opened. More roads were built. Trucks carried goods from place to place. It was easy for people to travel. Cars changed the way of life.
Rosa Parks: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement

In 1955, some laws in the U.S. were not fair. All people were not treated the same way. Black people did not have the same rights as white people. In Alabama, they could not eat in the same places as white people. They could not drink from the same water fountain. Black and white children could not go to the same schools. White people could ride in the front of the city bus. Black people had to ride in the back of the bus. When black people got on the bus, they paid the driver. Then, they had to get off the bus and go to the back door to get on. Sometimes, the bus driver would leave a bus stop before black people got on. When the bus was crowded, black people had to give up their seats to white people.

Rosa Parks was a black woman. She sewed for a living. Rosa rode a city bus home from work every day. One day, Rosa sat down in a bus seat. A white man got on the bus. He told Rosa to move. He wanted to sit in her seat. Rosa was tired. She was tired from working long hours. She was also tired of being treated unfairly. She told the man, “No.” The white man got mad. He called the bus driver. The bus driver told Rosa to move. She would not leave her seat. The bus driver called the police. They arrested Rosa. She was convicted. She had to pay a fine to get out of jail.

People became angry at the way Rosa was treated. They decided not to ride the city buses. This was called a bus boycott. It lasted 381 days. Rosa’s case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court agreed with Rosa. The law was changed.

Rosa Parks was a hero to people of all races. Her peaceful protest became a model for the civil rights movement in the U.S. When she died, thousands of people of all races honored her. Rosa had made the world a better place to live.
Garter Snakes

Garter snakes make great pets. They live in many places. Garter snakes live in gardens. They live near houses. They are often the first snake a child sees. Children like to catch garter snakes. It is lucky that garters are safe snakes. If someone comes near them, garters will hide. If someone tries to fight, the garter will fight back. But garters never start a fight. They will never attack people or pets first. Garter snakes live between three and ten years.

Some people call garter snakes "garden snakes." Other people call them grass snakes. Garter snakes are usually striped. Some garter snakes have red or yellow stripes. Their background color is plain or checked. Garter snakes are not very big. Full-grown garter snakes are two to three feet in length. They are also very narrow in width. Because they are small, garters are quick to heat up. They are also quick to cool down.

Garter snakes sleep in the ground during the winter. They come out of the ground in the spring. Garter snakes like to bask in the sun during the day.

Garter snakes eat insects. They also eat worms and frogs. Since they are small, they are agile. This makes it easier for them to catch their prey. Garters use their sight mostly to hunt their prey, although they can also "hear" vibrations in the ground. Garters hunt during the cooler part of the day.
The Ancient Kingdom of Kush

Kush was once part of Egypt. It was on the southern part of the Nile River. Egypt became weak. The army was not strong. Priests and nobles fought with the kings. Kush rulers broke away from Egypt. This was in 671 B.C. Kush built a capital in Meroe.

Meroe was a good place for a city. It had iron ore and lots of wood. Workers knew how to make pure metal from ore. Brick ovens were used to heat the iron ore. Bellows were used to make wood fires very hot. Pure iron was used to make tools and weapons. Iron spears and swords were very strong. They were stronger than bronze weapons. There were also many artists in Meroe. They made beautiful bowls, vases, and jewelry.

Meroe became a trade center. Traders came from all around. They wanted iron and artworks. They traded fine cloth, glass, skins, gold, silver, and ivory. Meroe was a great city.

In A.D. 350, a nearby army came to Meroe. They made war. The people did not fight back. Some people were killed. Many became slaves. A few ran away. The army took food and iron. The army set fire to reed houses and brick buildings. The whole city burned down. No one came back to the city. That was the end of Kush.
Thomas Edison: An American Inventor

Thomas A. Edison is a well-known inventor in the U.S. His most famous invention was the electric light bulb. He put thin wire inside an airless glass globe. It was not like the lights used today. It did not have a steady light. The light bulb flickered. But it worked for forty hours.

Soon the light bulb worked longer. People started to use light bulbs in the house. They did not need to use lamp oil or candles. The bulbs were safer. They did not need to use fire for light.

Edison had many good ideas. People liked the "talking machine." This was the first record player. The first "record" was made from a thin piece of tin. The tin covered a tube. The tube slipped over a pipe-like part. Records were hollow tubes. The tubes were covered with wax. It was years before records were flat and round.

He had other good ideas. At first, films did not have sound. The words were printed at the bottom of the film. People read the words and watched the actors at the same time. Edison made records to go with the films. People could hear what the actors had to say. Today people use things that Thomas A. Edison invented.
Boys and Girls Clubs: Great Places to Hang Out

The Boys and Girls Clubs started in 1860. At first, they were just Boys Clubs. In Hartford, there were boys who roamed the streets. The Boys Clubs were started to give these boys a safe place to go.

Many years later, in 1990, the name was changed. The Boys Club became the Boys and Girls Club. Today, many kids are home alone after school. They do not have adults to care for them. The Boys and Girls Clubs can help these kids.

There are Boys and Girls Clubs in many U.S. cities. There are clubs on Native American reservations, too. There are more than 3,000 clubs in the U.S. More than 3 million boys and girls go to these clubs.

The clubs are open before school. They are also open after school. The club staff helps kids with homework. The clubs also offer fun things to do. There are games to play. The clubs have sports. Many have computers. Boys and Girls Clubs have classes, too. The classes teach kids skills they need to know to succeed in life. Boys and Girls Clubs are great places to learn and grow.
The Food Chain: A Cycle of Life

The food chain is a cycle. Plants need sunlight, air, and water to grow. Plants grow almost everywhere on earth. Animals eat living things. Some eat plants. Some eat other animals. Many eat both plants and animals. Animals, in turn, are food for even bigger animals. When big animals die, smaller animals eat them. Some of the animal parts rot on the ground. This makes nutrients for the ground. This helps the plants to grow.

The food chain is very simple. Here is an example. A bear gets old and dies. The body lies on the ground. The little bugs and flies find the body. They eat the bear. One of the flies is caught in a spider web. The spider eats the fly. Along comes a bigger insect. It eats the spider. The insect rests on the lake water. A little fish snaps at the insect. The little fish eats the insect. A bigger fish eats the little fish. A bear comes to the lake and catches the big fish. The bear eats the big fish. The cycle starts all over again. The food chain happens every day in many different ways. Every part of the food chain is important.
Rivers and Canals: Our Water Highways

In the 1700s, going from one place to another was hard. The roads were not good. The roads were more like trails. People had to walk, ride horses, or use horses to pull wagons. Towns were far apart. It took a long time to go from place to place. It was easier to use rivers to move people and goods. Rivers became very busy. Rafts moved up and down the rivers. Flour, grains, cotton, wheat, corn, and meat moved on the rafts. Many people used rivers to move west. They wanted farms close to the rivers. There were many towns along the rivers.

The rivers and lakes were not connected. So people dug canals. The longest canal was the Erie Canal. It was 363 miles long. It ran from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. They started to dig the canal in 1819. It took six years to dig the canal. Goods were placed on rafts. Mules pulled the rafts. The mules walked along paths on the banks of the canals. A mule could pull a load 50 times heavier than it could on any road. Now goods and people could move easily.
Marco Polo: A World Traveler

Marco Polo was born in 1254. He lived in Venice. He was one of the first people to travel to China. He was seventeen when he left on his trip. He went with his father. It took three years to get to China. They used camels. There were many stops along the way. They crossed mountains, rivers, and deserts.

In China, Polo saw many new things. Colorful silk cloth was used to make clothes. Food had many spices. The people ate rice and drank tea. Life was well-ordered. The cities were large. Paper money was used. Moveable print blocks were used to print on paper. Good records were kept. They had fireworks. Kites flew in the sky. A compass was used in travel. The Polos were away from home for twenty-four years. They brought back gold, silver, diamonds, and rubies.

Marco Polo wrote a book. The book was about the many things he saw and did in China. He told about life in China. At first people did not believe him. Some people went to China. They found that Marco Polo was right. Trade between China and Europe grew. It took a long time to travel to China. Soon people wanted a faster way to travel. Men began to sail to China.
The Great Wall: One of the World’s Seven Wonders

The Great Wall of China is one of the Seven Wonders of the World.

The Great Wall is very big. It is in north China. The wall goes from east to west. It goes over mountains, across grasslands, and through deserts.

The Great Wall is more than 3,000 miles long. It is about 40 feet tall and 15 feet wide. The top of the wall is more like a big road for horses and people to walk on. Because the Great Wall is so big and long, it can be seen from outer space.

It took more than 2,000 years to build the Great Wall. It was built to keep the enemies out of China. Along the wall are watchtowers. A long time ago, soldiers and horses lived on the wall. There are big gates in the wall. In times of peace, people could come and go from China.

There are hundreds of steps to the top of the wall. Today people can climb to the top of the Great Wall. Many people come to visit the Great Wall every year. They climb to the top of the wall. Some of them buy a T-shirt that says, “I climbed to the top of the Great Wall.” They are proud that they were able to climb to the top of the wall.
Jim Thorpe: Athlete of the Century

Jim was born in 1888. He was a Native American. Jim was always a great athlete. He rode horses at 3 years of age. By 5, he was a swimmer. In high school, he played football. Later, Jim went to college. He played semi-pro baseball. He was paid $60 a month.

In 1912, Jim went to the Olympics. The games were held in Sweden. Jim won many gold medals. He won the pentathlon. It has five different sports. Jim was first in four of them. Then he won the decathlon. It has ten events. Jim was first in four of those. Jim came in second in two more. He was third in the rest. He set a world’s record. The king of Sweden called him the best athlete in the world.

Olympic athletes are not supposed to be paid for playing sports. Some people found out that Jim had been paid a little money to play baseball. So, his gold medals were taken away. This made people angry. Jim went on to play pro baseball. He also played pro football. He was a star in both sports. People loved Jim. They even named a town after him.

Jim died in 1953. Thirty years later, his gold medals were given back to his children.
The Louisiana Purchase: A Good Deal

The Mississippi River valley is very large. In 1800, it belonged to France. All of the rivers that feed into the Mississippi are part of the valley. The people of the U.S. lived on the east side of the river. They farmed the land. Rivers were used to move farm goods. They floated wheat, lumber, tobacco, and cotton on log rafts. New Orleans is at the end of the river. Farm goods were sold in New Orleans. The goods were sent to the U.S. and other ports. New Orleans belonged to France. New Orleans was a big city. People wanted New Orleans to be part of the U.S.

In 1802, France was in a long war. France was at war with England. France wanted money for the army. The U.S. was going to give ten million dollars for New Orleans. France offered to sell the whole valley. Not just New Orleans. The U.S. took a chance. They offered five million. France said, “No.” The U.S. knew the river valley was very big. In the west, it goes all of the way to the Rocky Mountains. In the north, it goes almost to Canada. The U.S. made a final offer of 15 million. France needed the money. They accepted the offer.

This was a good deal for the U.S. People could move west. There was lots of land for the people to farm. The U.S. became much bigger.
Ben Franklin: Inventor and Statesman

Ben Franklin was born in Boston in 1706. His father was a soap and candle maker. He had sixteen brothers and sisters. At ten, he started to work in his father's shop. He worked for his father for two years. Then he went to work for an older brother. Ben worked for nine years in his brother's print shop. At the age of 17, he left.

Ben went to Philadelphia. He opened his own print shop. He printed a newspaper and books. He wrote Poor Richard's Almanac. This book was filled with advice. It had odd bits of wisdom. "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise." "God helps them that help themselves." "One today is worth two tomorrows." "When the well is dry, they know the worth of water." He printed a new book every year. Many people bought his books. He became very rich.

Ben was an inventor. His cast-iron stove heated a room. Most of the heat did not go up the chimney. Bifocal eyeglasses let people see near and far. They did not need two pairs of glasses. He proved that lightning was electricity. To do this he flew a kite in a storm. He made a lightning rod. People put lightning rods on their houses. Lightning would strike the rod. It would travel to the ground. The house would not burn. Ben became famous.

Ben was a public servant. He helped to set up the first fire department. He worked on the first library. He was the town postmaster. He wanted to unite all of the colonies. He signed the Declaration of Independence. Ben Franklin cared about the U.S.
Weather: It's What's Outside That Counts

How do we tell the weather? We look outside. The weather is the air around us. Weather can take many forms. Rain, snow, and wind are forms of weather. Hurricanes and tornadoes are also forms of weather. Many elements work together to make weather. There are three important elements. They are heat, air, and water.

Heat comes from the sun to the earth. Without heat, there would be no life. Heat travels in the form of light and energy. When it arrives, it enters the blanket of air that surrounds the earth. This blanket of air is called the atmosphere. Atmosphere has weight. It presses down on all parts of the earth. This pressure is called air pressure. The earth's air is full of air pressure. Some parts have low pressure. Warm air is lighter than cold air. When there is warm, light air, there is lower air pressure.

Other parts of the earth have high air pressure. When the air is colder, the pressure is higher.

Wind is made when air moves between low and high pressure areas. When there is a big difference in pressure, the wind moves fast. Sometimes this causes very strong winds. Strong winds cause hurricanes and tornadoes.

Water is also important. Our air is made up of many gases. One kind of gas is water vapor. Water turns into water vapor when it is warm. On warm days, there is more water vapor in the air. On cold days, there is less water vapor. The amount of water vapor determines how humid the air will be. When air rises, water vapor can turn into droplets. These droplets can make clouds. Then clouds can cause water to fall from the sky.

Weather is important. It affects our lives. If the weather is nice, we like to be outside. We wear light clothes. If the weather is bad, we try to stay inside. We wear thick, warm clothes. We can't control the weather. But we need to pay attention to it.
Guide Dogs: Helpful Pets

Most people think of dogs as great pets. But some dogs are more than pets. They are guide dogs. Guide dogs help people in many ways.

Seeing Eye dogs help people who are blind. These dogs act as eyes for their owners. Seeing Eye dogs help their owners travel from place to place. Seeing Eye dogs ride on buses with their owners. They lead people across busy streets. The dogs go in stores and restaurants with their owners.

Hearing dogs help people who are deaf. These dogs alert their owners to important sounds. Hearing dogs can be trained to listen for the telephone ring. They might listen for the doorbell or alarm clock. They can also listen for a baby’s cry. The Hearing dog will nudge its owner when it hears an important sound.

Other dogs are helpers for people in wheelchairs. These dogs help with physical tasks. They might pick up dropped objects. They are trained to flip light switches. These dogs are able to open drawers and doors.

Guide dogs help their owners to live full lives. With a guide dog, owners don’t have to rely on other people to help them. They can be independent. Guide dogs are more than pets. They are lifelines for their owners.
Sharks: Amazing Fish

Sharks have lived in the oceans for millions of years. Sharks were on earth before there were whales. They were on earth before the dinosaurs.

Sharks are amazing fish. They have many teeth. In fact, sharks are covered with teeth. Unlike other fish, sharks do not have bones. Most fish have skeletons made of bone. But a shark skeleton is made of gristle.

Bony fish have skin that is covered with smooth scales. Sharks have skin that is covered with denticles. Denticles are small, sharp teeth. They can cut and scratch. Sharks have many rows of teeth. If a shark tooth falls out, another tooth moves forward to take its place. This happens very quickly. During its lifetime, a shark may have a thousand sets of teeth.

Many people think there is just one kind of shark. In fact, there are at least 350 kinds of sharks. The largest shark is the whale shark. It is as big as two elephants. The smallest shark is the cigar shark. It can fit in a person's hand. The great white shark is known as "the man eater."

People are afraid of the great white shark. It sometimes attacks people in water. The great white shark mostly eats large fish. It also eats seals and otters.

There is no type of shark that naturally preys on humans. Only in the last 100 years have there been reports of shark attacks on people. This is because more people are going in the water. A person is more likely to be killed in a car accident than to be attacked by a shark.
Until about 1850 there were no real roads in the U.S. Most towns were near water. Roads were used to get things to docks. Rivers and canals were used to carry things long distances. Most people traveled on foot, on horses, or by horse-drawn wagons. Some people used trains and boats. Roads were trails through the woods. The trails were narrow and rutted. They were muddy when it rained. Snow piled up on the trails. Trails were dusty in the summer. Sometimes the trails had logs across them. The roads were not good.

In the 1900s, people began to own cars. People could not drive cars on the trails. They wanted good roads. In 1909, there were over 190,000 miles of road with a hard surface. These roads were made of crushed rock. They were not made of concrete. People wanted better roads.

By 1920, more people had cars. Cars saved time and work. People did not want to wait for trains and boats. They wanted to go places that trains and boats did not go to. People wanted to go lots of places in cars. People wanted more roads.

When there were better roads, people started to use buses. Trucks were a new way to carry things. By 1930, there were 640,000 miles of roads with hard surfaces. People used roads more and more. Today there are millions of miles of roads in the U.S.
The Mexican Flag: Green, White, and Red

The Mexican flag is a banner with three bands of color. Its colors are green, white, and red. The green band is on the left side of the flag. It stands for the earth. The white band is in the middle of the flag. It stands for purity. The red band is on the right side of the flag. It is a symbol of blood. It stands for the blood shed during battles. These battles took place during Mexico’s War for Independence.

There is an eagle inside the white band in the center of the flag. The eagle is eating a rattlesnake. Its left claw is perched on a cactus. There are green oak branches on the left below the eagle. These stand for strength. There are laurel branches on the right below the eagle. These stand for victory. The eagle is from an Aztec legend. The Aztecs were told by their god of the sun to look for their promised land. They would know the place when they found an eagle eating a snake while standing on a cactus. The Aztecs found such a place in 1325. They built their homes on land that is now Mexico City.
Harriet Tubman: Conductor of Freedom

Harriet was born in 1820. Her parents were slaves in Maryland. That meant Harriet was a slave, too. Slaves were owned by a "master."

Even though she was just a child, Harriet had to work. Her job was to take care of the master's baby. She had to keep the baby from crying at night. If the baby cried, Harriet was whipped. Harriet hated being a slave. She wanted to be free.

When she grew up, Harriet married John Tubman. He was a free black man. But Harriet was still a slave. A few years later, Harriet became worried that she was going to be sold. She decided to run away. She escaped to the northern part of the U.S. There was no slavery in the North. Harriet ended up in Pennsylvania. She got a job there and saved her money.

Harriet wanted to help other slaves become free. It was dangerous to help slaves escape. But Harriet was very brave. She went back to Maryland 19 times to help the slaves there. She showed slaves how to follow the Underground Railroad. This "railroad" was a group of homes. They were called "safe houses." They were owned by people who wanted to help the slaves. Slaves could stop to rest at the safe houses along the way as they moved north.

Harriet Tubman helped 300 slaves become free. Harriet is an American hero.
Kites in China reflect culture. Kites have many shapes. Most of the kites are made in the shape of animals. The kite shapes that most people like are deer, tigers, birds, fish, and dragons. People in China think that the animal shapes have meaning. Deer are good luck. The tiger, king of the animals, is mighty and strong. Catfish are for more wealth in the coming year. Dragons are wise and very important in China. Many kites look like dragons. In China, there are many big and many small kites. Old and young people fly kites.

In China people have flown kites for more than 2,400 years. The old people teach the young people about kite culture. They show them how to make the kites with paper and wood. Some little kites have one part. Very big kites have many parts and shapes. The people paint the kites with many colors. The kites are very pretty. Every day many people fly kites in the sky.

People believe that kite flying is healthy. When someone is worn-out and tired, or when they want to get out of the house, they go outside and fly a kite. They watch their pretty kites go up in the sky. When people fly kites, they can look at the sky, clouds, and trees. This makes them feel good and happy. Many people in China like to fly kites.
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White, Brown, and Black: The Bear Facts

There are three types of bears in North America. They are the polar bear, the brown bear, and the black bear. Canada and Alaska are the only places where all three types of bears live.

Polar bears are marine mammals. They live in very cold climates where there is ice and snow. Polar bears have hair that looks white. They are the largest kind of bear. When they stand on their hind legs, polar bears are between 8 and 10 feet tall. Polar bears can weigh between 600 and 1,400 pounds. They are meat eaters. They have special claws which help them to hold onto the ice and catch seals. The ringed seal is the polar bear's favorite meal!

Brown bears have different colors and names. Some brown bears are dark brown. Other brown bears are blonder. All brown bears have a hump above their shoulders. This hump is made of fat and muscle. Brown bears who live on the coast are called brownies. Those who live in the interior are grizzlies. Grizzlies are smaller and meaner than brownies. Brown bears are 6 to 8 feet tall when standing on their hind legs. They can weigh between 400 and 1,500 pounds. Brown bears eat a lot of different things like bugs, fish, berries, and baby animals. They spend all summer eating to store up fat for a winter nap.

Black bears are the smallest kind of bear. They are only 5 or 6 feet when standing on their hind legs. Some black bears are a jet black color. Others are lighter. Most black bears have brown noses and big ears. Black bears weigh between 100 and 400 pounds. They have claws that are sharp and curved. These special claws help them to climb trees.
The Yangtze River is the longest river in China. It is the third longest river in the world. It runs from the mountains in the West to the flat land in the East by the China Sea. Over 700 rivers flow into the Yangtze. The water in the river is brown. The river runs like a zigzag all of the way from the mountains to the sea.

The Yangtze River is divided into three parts. In the upper part, the river is small. There are many big rocks and waterfalls. The water moves very fast. Boats cannot sail in the upper part.

In the middle part, the water flow is slower. Many boats sail on the river. There are tall hills on both sides of the river. Sometimes only one boat can sail at a time. There are lots of trees and flowers. It is very pretty. There are many small towns and fishing villages built along the river. In this part of the river, a dam is being built. It will be the world’s biggest dam. Then there will be no more floods.

In the lower part of the river, the river is wide. The water flow is very slow. Many ships sail on the river. The land beside the river is flat. There are many farms and big cities along the river.

The Yangtze River is a very important river in China. People have lived and worked along the river for thousands of years.
Is It a Solid, a Liquid, or a Gas?

Scientists tell us that all matter has three forms. All matter has some weight or mass. All matter also takes up some space in our universe.

Atoms make up all matter. There are three forms of matter.

The first kind of matter is a solid. A solid has weight or mass, and it takes up space. A solid is different from a liquid or a gas. A solid has its own shape. Solids, such as wood, a glass, or a toy top, are one example of matter. Solids are hard. They don’t change their shapes. Some other examples of solids are soft and bend easily. Shirts and modeling clay are two examples of this kind of solid.

The second type of matter is a liquid. Water, milk, and honey are examples of liquids. A liquid does not have a shape of its own. A liquid takes the shape of whatever container it is in. If milk is in a tall glass, then the milk is tall. If honey is on a spoon, then the honey takes the shape of the spoon.

The third type of matter is a gas. A gas is like a liquid because it takes the shape of its container. But a gas is different from a liquid in that it fills the entire container. A gas may have color or a smell, but it may not have either. We can’t see the air, but we can feel it when the wind blows. Matter is what makes up our universe, and it only takes three forms. Those three forms make up everything in our world.
Many people think of a sponge as a kitchen tool. Kitchen sponges are one kind of sponge. These sponges are man-made. Other types of sponges are alive. These types of sponges are animals. They actually look more like plants than animals. However, a sponge is the simplest form of a multicellular animal. Most sponges live in the oceans of the world. A few sponges live in fresh water. Sponges do not live on land.

There are two basic types of sponges: encrusting and freestanding. Encrusting sponges look like moss. They cover the surface of rocks. Freestanding sponges have more inner volume. They can grow into strange shapes. They can become very big. The barrel sponge is a freestanding sponge. It grows in the tropics. A whole person could fit inside some barrel sponges. Tube sponges also grow in the tropics. They come in many beautiful colors.

A sponge does not have a head or a mouth. Nor does a sponge have arms or feet. So a sponge cannot move. It stays in one place for its whole life. If a sponge is touched, it does not react. It lives on the bottom of the ocean. A sponge attaches to something solid. It finds a place where there is enough food. A sponge does not make its own food like a plant does. That is one reason that the sponge is an animal. Sponges capture food. A sponge eats tiny plants and animals that live in the water around it. Sponges have a thin outside layer. Inside this outer layer is an open space. The open space is called a pore. Tiny hairs move constantly in the water. The hairs send food and water through the pores. Special cells in the pores eat the tiny bits of food and organisms. The rest of the water and food goes out the top of the sponge. Sponges are covered with pores. No wonder that their scientific name means, “pore-bearing.”
Camels: One Hump or Two?

Camels are funny looking mammals with humps on their backs. Camels are large animals. They are seven or eight feet tall. They have small heads but long, curved necks. Their legs are long, but their bodies are heavy. Camels are used for riding or for carrying heavy loads.

There are two kinds of camels. Camels with one hump live in Arabia, Asia, and North America. These camels have long legs and are good for riding. One-hump camels can run 8 or 10 miles an hour. They can travel 100 miles each day. Riding a camel is not like riding a horse. First, a camel has to kneel down before the rider can get on its back. These camels have hard pads on their knees and chest. The camel’s feet are wide, with two toes. This helps to keep them from sinking into the sand. The camel moves its right legs together and then its left legs. Riding on a camel is like rolling or swaying from side to side.

Two-hump camels live in Central Asia. They are used to cold climates and rocky land. Camels with two humps have shorter legs with hard soles on their feet. They are used as pack animals. These camels can carry four- or five-hundred pounds on their backs. They can walk two or three miles an hour.
Our planet is always moving. Earth moves around the sun in a path. This path is called an orbit. Each year, the earth orbits the sun. There is an imaginary line that runs through the center of the earth. This line is called an axis. The two points where the axis passes through the earth are called poles. There is the North Pole and the South Pole. As the earth moves around the sun, it spins on its axis. This spinning causes day and night. The side of the earth that is pointed to the sun has daylight. The side of the earth that is pointed away from the sun has darkness. The days change as the earth orbits the sun. The length of the days changes. The temperature changes.

There are four seasons: fall, winter, spring, and summer. The seasons change because of the earth's axis and the earth's orbit. Each of the earth's poles is turned toward the sun for part of the year. Each pole is turned away from the sun for the other part of the year.

Fall begins in late September. The first day of fall is called the fall equinox. During the fall equinox, the sun is just above the equator. The day and the night are the same length. During the fall season, temperatures drop more quickly.

Winter begins in December. The first day of winter is called the winter solstice. It is the shortest day of the year. That means that there are less hours of daylight than on any other day of the year. After December 21, the days begin to get longer by a few minutes each day.

Spring begins around March 20. As in the fall season, there is an equinox in the spring. That is when the day and the night are the same length. After the spring equinox, the daylight hours get longer by a few minutes every day. The temperatures start to get warmer.

Summer is the warmest season. It begins around June 21. The first day of summer is called the summer solstice. It is the longest day of the year. That means that there are more daylight hours on this day than on any other day.
Whales: Huge Sea Mammals

The whale is a sea mammal that breathes air but cannot live on land. It is the largest known mammal. The whale is one of two kinds of mammals that live in the water for their entire lives. Like all mammals, whales are warm-blooded and nurse their young. There are many kinds of whales. The largest whale is the blue whale. A blue whale can grow to be about 94 feet long. That is the size of a 9-story building. The smallest whale is a dwarf sperm whale. These whales only grow to be about eight-feet long.

A whale looks like a very large fish. It has flukes in its tail, which help it to swim through the water. Whales have flippers that are sort of like the fingers and hands of mammals that live on land. The whale is covered with smooth, glossy skin, which helps it to swim fast in the water. Below the skin is a layer of fat called blubber that helps to keep the whale warm. Because of this blubber, a whale does not need as much hair or fur as a land mammal. In fact, adult whales have almost no hair. Whales have large, broad heads, but very small eyes. Whales breathe air through their lungs before diving underwater for fifteen or twenty minutes at a time. While air is in the whale’s lungs, it becomes warm and moist. When this air is released through the whale’s blowhole, it becomes a kind of vapor. This is the called the spout. Each type of whale has its own kind of spout. For example, the blue whale has a tall, thick spout while the humpback whale’s spout is low and round. Experienced whale watchers can tell whales apart by their spouts.
The first emperor of China built a big tomb. When he died, he wanted to be buried in his tomb. The tomb was very, very big. It was made of wood. It covered more than five city blocks. The emperor had a big army. He had more than 8,000 soldiers. He had more than 500 horses. A clay model was made for each of his soldiers. Clay models were made for the horses. The emperor put the clay soldiers and horses in the tomb. He put bows, arrows, and spears in the tomb.

The emperor believed that the souls of the soldiers and horses would go to the afterlife with him. The first emperor was not nice to his people. He made them build his tomb and work on the Great Wall. The people were not happy. When the emperor died, he was put in the tomb with the clay soldiers and horses. Two years later, the poor farmers got mad. They broke into the tomb. The farmers took the bows, arrows, and spears. They knocked down the soldiers. The clay soldiers broke into pieces. The poor farmers burned the tomb. Everyone forgot about the tomb. Dirt covered the tomb. It became a little hill. People started to farm on the hill.

Two thousand years later, in 1974, some farmers were digging a well. They found some clay parts of the soldiers. They started to dig a pit. In China, they are still digging in the pit to this day. They find parts of the clay soldiers. Then they put each soldier back together. It will take many years to dig up the soldier parts. It will take even longer to put all of the soldiers together. There may even be more clay figures in the tomb of the first emperor.
Bridges: An Important Beginning

Bridges are important. People have many reasons to build bridges.

Cave people built bridges with logs. They put logs across a stream. Then they walked to the other side. People who lived in jungles made bridges from vines. They twisted plant vines into ropes. They put two vine ropes next to each other. Then they tied the vines to trees. Bridges helped people to cross rivers. They could go to a better hunting ground. They could go to trade with other people.

People all over the world build bridges. Bridges are made in many ways. In China, bridges were made with houses on each end. Sometimes there were places to eat on the bridges. These kinds of bridges were nice for travelers. The Romans made beautiful stone bridges. Roman bridges had rounded openings. These openings are called arches. Arch bridges are still built today. In Persia, armies built bridges that floated. They used small boats with a floor on top. Armies used floating bridges when they wanted to cross water in a hurry. Floating bridges are called pontoon bridges.

Not all bridges go over water. Some bridges go over land. Some go over railroad tracks. Others go over buildings. Still others go over highways. Early bridges were made of wood. Now they are made of steel or concrete.
Jesse Owens: Olympic Athlete

Jesse was born in Alabama in 1913. His father was a sharecropper. When he was 9, Jesse’s family moved to Ohio. In high school, Jesse tried out for the track team. Jesse ran the 100-yard dash. He was very fast. Jesse ran it in just 9.4 seconds. His coach was amazed. Coach Riley helped Jesse become a high school track and broad jump star.

Jesse went on to college in Ohio. He broke world records for running and jumping. Jesse went to the Olympics in Germany in 1936. Hitler was then the leader of Germany. He thought white Germans were better than Jews. He also thought they were better than black people. Jesse was African American. He won four gold medals at the Olympics. This made Hitler mad. He did not congratulate Jesse.

Most other Germans liked Jesse. They admired his skills. One German athlete helped Jesse at the Olympics. His name was Lutz Long. Lutz gave Jesse advice. The advice helped Jesse to qualify for—and win—the gold medal for broad jump. Jesse never forgot Lutz’s friendship.

During his life, Jesse set seven world records. When he retired, he gave speeches. He said that athletes should be honest. He told them to live healthy lives.

Jesse Owens was not just a great athlete. He was a very good person.
The Right to Read

Reading is important. It is a useful skill. People who can read have an easier time in life. They can read traffic signs, menus, and maps. They can pass a test to get a driver's license. They can apply for a job. Reading is also powerful. People who can read can learn about all kinds of things.

However, not everyone can read. Some experts study reading. They say that one out of every six people in the world can’t read. There are many reasons for this problem. Some countries do not let girls go to school. In those countries, many women cannot read. Other people live in very poor countries. No one can afford to learn to read in these countries. They are busy trying to find food to eat. Many countries are at war. Their people are fighting to stay alive. They do not have time to learn to read.

In the U.S., there are many people who do not speak English. They came from other countries. It is hard to come to a new country. It takes time to learn the language well enough to read it. Other people have learning problems. It is harder for them to learn to read.

The good news is that everyone can learn how to read. There are special programs to teach people to read. One of the best ways to become better at reading is to read every day. Countries want to show their citizens how important it is to learn to read. Every September 8, we celebrate International Literacy Day. Literacy is a word that means being able to read, write, and speak.
A Mexican Fiesta

A fiesta is a party. Mexican people celebrate with a fiesta. A fiesta can be held to honor a person. It can also be held to honor an event.

Some fiestas are simple ones. They may last only one day. Fiestas can also be elaborate. They can last for a week or more.

Fiestas are colorful. Green, white, and red are used for decorations. These are the colors of the Mexican flag. Flowers are also used. Fiestas have lots of music. Mariachi bands usually play. There is much singing and dancing. One kind of dance is the Mexican Hat Dance.

Fiestas have a lot of food. There are many kinds of spicy dishes. People feast all day long. Some fiestas have parades. People dress up in costumes. There may be fireworks. Sometimes, there are rodeos. Other times, there may be bullfights.

One thing is for certain: Fiestas are FUN!
Helen Keller was born on June 27, 1880. She was a healthy baby at first. Then she got sick. She had a high fever. Helen almost died. The fever went away after many days. But Helen was not the same. She was now deaf and blind.

The next few years were very hard. Helen was angry. She cried and threw things on the floor. She grabbed food off people’s plates. Her parents did not know what to do. They asked an expert for help. He was Alexander Graham Bell. Bell had invented the telephone. But he also worked with deaf children. Bell told Helen’s parents to hire a special teacher for Helen. Helen’s parents wrote to a special school. It was the Perkins School for the Blind. They asked for a special teacher to come work with Helen.

On March 3, 1887, Annie Sullivan came to live at the Keller’s home. Annie told Helen’s parents that Helen must learn to behave. She said that it was not fair to let Helen act wild. The kind thing to do would be to teach Helen. Annie showed Helen how to eat with a spoon and fork. Most important of all, Annie taught Helen words by spelling them into her hand. At first, Helen did not understand. Her teacher never gave up. One day, Annie poured water over Helen’s hand. Then she spelled the word water into Helen’s hand. Finally, Helen understood! She understood that words had meaning. That day was the turning point for Helen. From then on, she began to learn quickly. Helen learned to read using raised letters. Later, she learned to read braille. Helen also learned to write. She used a special typewriter. Annie Sullivan continued to help Helen. Helen Keller went to college. The college was Radcliffe College in Boston. Helen was the first deaf and blind person to earn a degree from Radcliffe. The story of Helen Keller and her teacher, Annie Sullivan, is a famous one. Many books, plays, and movies tell their story.
Have you ever wondered how a river begins? A river gets its start high in the mountains or in the hills. It begins as a very small stream. The river may also get its start from a spring bubbling from beneath the ground. The little stream begins to flow downward from its mountain home. Other little streams join it. More and more water begins to flow downward. Soon the little streams have joined to become a brook. The brook continues to grow bigger. Then the brook becomes a river.

Some smaller rivers that join the big river are called its tributaries. The ground that the river flows over is called the riverbed. The river’s banks are its left and right sides. As the river travels, it picks up small stones, sticks, and soil. Where the river empties into a lake or a sea is its mouth. The river drops what it is carrying at its mouth when it meets a lake or the sea. All of the stones, sticks, and soil the river drops build up to form land.

The land that is formed at the river’s mouth is called its delta. The river’s delta has rich soil for farming. A river delta grows many crops. It takes hundreds and hundreds of years to build up the river’s delta. Sometimes the river floods and takes soil from its delta. Other times it just keeps on adding soil. This makes its delta even larger. All of the small streams, brooks, and small rivers that empty into the big river form the big river’s basin. Some river basins are hundreds of miles wide.
Dolores Huerta: Labor Leader

Dolores Huerta was born in 1930. She lived in a mining town in New Mexico. Her parents divorced when she was three years old. Dolores and her mother, Alicia, moved to California. They settled in the central valley. There were many farms there. Farm workers picked crops. They worked hard. Farm workers made little money. It was hard for them to buy food and shoes.

Alicia owned a hotel. She was a generous woman. She let farm workers and their families stay for free. Alicia taught her daughter to be kind and caring.

Dolores went to college. She became a teacher. She felt sad for the children of farm workers. Many of them came to school hungry. Some needed shoes. Others had to work in the fields. Most of the children went to many different schools.

Dolores left her job. She wanted to help the farm workers. Dolores met a man named Cesar Chavez. He also worked hard to help farm workers. Together, Dolores and Cesar started a union. It was the United Farm Workers of America. Farm workers joined the union.

Sometimes, the union held a strike. That means that the farm workers stopped working. They did not pick any more crops until their changes were made. The FWA asked for the workers to be paid more money. The grape farmers would not pay better wages. In 1965, the workers went on strike. About 5,000 workers left their jobs. The strike lasted five years. When it was over, the workers won. They would make more money for their hard work.

Dolores did not quit when the strike was over. She spoke against using pesticides on crops. The pesticides made the workers sick. She kept fighting for farm worker rights. Dolores helped them become U.S. citizens. She made sure that their children went to good schools. Dolores has won many awards for helping farm workers to have better lives.
Blackbeard: A Fierce Pirate

Blackbeard was one of the most hated pirates of all time. He became a pirate around 1713. He is thought to have come from England. His real name was Edward Teach. He had a long, black beard that covered most of his face. He braided his long, black beard and tied the braids with hemp. He also put hemp in his hair. Then he would light the hemp during battles. Blackbeard looked like his face was circled with fire. Many people were afraid of Blackbeard. When they saw him coming, they would give him what he wanted. Then Blackbeard would let them sail away. If people tried to fight Blackbeard, he would kill them. Even Blackbeard’s own men were afraid of him.

Blackbeard spent a lot of time off the coast of Virginia and the Carolinas in 1717 and 1718. His ship was called Queen Anne’s Revenge. Blackbeard stole ships and held people for ransom. One day his ship ran aground near Cape Fear. The governor of North Carolina pardoned Blackbeard. But Blackbeard would not stop his pirate ways. Blackbeard had captured more than 40 ships as a pirate. He had caused the death of hundreds of people. Finally, the governor sent a ship to arrest Blackbeard. There was a huge, bloody battle. Blackbeard put up a big fight but was killed. He died with 5 bullets and more than 20 stab wounds in his body.
Beware of Bears

Bears! Many people are fascinated by them. After all, who can resist a stuffed, cuddly teddy bear? Bear enclosures at zoos are often a popular exhibit. Watching adorable bear cubs romp brings smiles and chuckles from onlookers.

Bears in the wild are a different story. Bears are powerful animals and can kill humans. If you are a camper or a hiker, it is important to beware of bears. Bear country can be a dangerous place. Knowing some bear essentials can help to keep you safe.

First of all, never, ever try to feed a bear. Bears love garbage and are easily turned into junk-food addicts. They will then be attracted to areas when people gather, such as a camping ground. National parks and forests often have special “bear-proof” trash cans. Campers are told to keep their food locked up and put up in a tree. Bears will destroy cars and cabins in an attempt to get to a food source.

When in bear country, make noise to let the bears know that you are around. Bears like to be alone. They do not like to be surprised by people. Bears will usually stay away if they hear you coming.

Be alert when you are in bear country. Stay away from dense brush. Use a flashlight at night. Be on the lookout for bear droppings. Do not set up camp if you see signs of a bear. Be especially careful if you see bear cubs. You can be sure that the mother bear is near. She might attack to protect her cubs. If you happen to come across a bear, do not run! Instead, back away very slowly. Use bear (pepper) spray only as a last resort.
Sounds: Moving Waveforms

Sounds are a part of everyday life. Car horns beep. Dogs bark. Children shout. Noisy jets roar across the sky. People whisper to one another. There are hundreds of sounds made every day. It is easy for people to tell them apart. But there are other sounds that cannot be heard by people. These sounds are too high-pitched for the human ear. They are called ultrasounds.

Sounds are produced by a certain type of motion. These motions are called vibrations. Sound travels from a vibrating object to a human ear. It does this by using a sound carrier. The sound carrier may be a solid, liquid, or a gas. One way sound travels is through air. Sound waves make the particles in the air move. One moving particle touches another particle and makes that new particle move. Then that particle touches the next particle and so on. If there is no sound carrier, no sound can be heard.

The speed of sound depends upon how it is traveling. Sound travels a little faster in warmer air than it does in colder air. However, sound travels much faster in water than it does in air. It travels even faster in solids such as steel or aluminum. The denser the sound carrier, the faster the sound travels. The speed of sound is slower than the speed of light though. That is why we hear thunder after we see lightning.
Bones are alive! They are made of living tissue. Calcium and phosphorous and bone cells make up bones. All of the bones in a body make up the skeleton. An infant has over a hundred and forty more bones than an adult. The baby has around three hundred and fifty bones in its body. An adult has only two hundred and six bones. What happened to over one hundred and forty bones? As a baby begins to grow and develop, some of those bones grow together. This is called fusion.

Bones are very important. They give bodies their shape. Muscles are attached to bones. The muscles allow the bones to give the body movement. People are able to run and jump because of their bones and muscles. Bones are also hard and strong. They protect the soft organs of the body. The heart, lungs, and brain are soft organs. Bones provide a protective cage around these important organs.

It is important to keep bones strong. One way to do this is to eat green vegetables and drink milk. Green vegetables and milk have calcium and phosphorous. These help keep bones strong. Strong bones help bodies to stay healthy.
A cave is a hollow room found in the earth. There are many kinds of caves. Caves are important to scientists who study early humanity. Scientists can often find the signs of early life in caves. Cave people lived in caves more than one hundred thousand years ago. The cave people left paintings on cave walls. These paintings showed the types of animals they hunted. Fossils of early plant and animal life have been discovered in caves.

One type of cave is formed when water wears away soft rock under the ground. Mammoth Cave in Kentucky is a famous United States cave. Mammoth Cave is more than 200 miles long. Some of its rooms are over fifty feet high. There are so many streams in Mammoth Cave that visitors can travel in boats. Since the cave is dark, the fish that live there do not have eyes. They do not need to see.

Another kind of cave is called a sea cave. This type of cave is formed by ocean waves pounding against cliffs. A famous sea cave, called Fingal’s Cave, can be found in Scotland. Ice caves form when glaciers melt and then freeze again. Austria is the home of a famous ice cave. An ice cave called the Singing Cave can be found in Iceland. Another type of cave is a lava cave. The lava of a volcano forms a lava cave.
Glaciers: Rivers of Ice

A river has a lot of water in it. Some rivers are long and wide. Other rivers are short and narrow. One kind of river carries boats and people and supplies to towns and cities along its banks. Another kind of river has a lot of water in it. This river does not carry boats or people or supplies. It does move, but it moves very, very slowly. This river is made of ice, and it has a special name. This river of ice is called a glacier.

When snow falls in most places, it melts when the weather turns warm. But there are some places that never get warm. The snow does not melt. Year after year, the snow and ice sit on the tops of high, cold mountains. After a time, the snow and ice become heavy and begin to slip down the mountains. This glacier or river of ice may only move from one to three feet per year. As the river of ice moves slowly down the mountains, its bottom edge may begin to melt off. This melting is caused because the bottom edge of the glacier reached lower, warmer valleys. The glacier changes the soil it flows over as it moves slowly down the mountains. Glaciers scrape the earth and move huge rocks and boulders in their paths. They also move and push trees and anything else in their paths.

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The Giraffe: World's Tallest Animal

The tallest animal in the world is the giraffe. A baby giraffe is almost 6 feet tall when it is born. It can then grow to be almost 18 feet tall! Because it is so tall, it takes a giraffe a long time to stand up. So, to be safe, giraffes sleep standing up. Then, if predators come after them, they are ready to run. Lions, hyenas, and wild dogs prey on giraffes. Giraffes have to be careful when they rest or bend down to drink.

Sometimes, giraffes in a herd take turns resting or drinking. That way, one giraffe is always on the lookout for danger. Giraffes have very good eyesight. They can spot danger a long way away. Giraffes can run from danger. In fact, they are fast runners. They can run up to 35 miles an hour! Giraffes can even outrun most horses. Their speed helps them to outrun their enemies. They also have strong hooves that they can use to kick out an enemy.

Giraffes have long necks but make very little noise. Scientists used to think that giraffes were mute. They now know that giraffes do make noises. These noises are called infrasounds. These sounds cannot be heard by humans. Giraffes also have long tongues. Their tongues are between 18 and 21 inches long. Giraffe tongues are prehensile. That means that the tongue is able to grab and hold on to objects. Giraffes need a long neck and a special tongue in order to eat. The giraffe's favorite food is the thorny leaf that grows on the acacia tree. Without a long neck, the giraffe could not reach the tops of tall trees to eat their tender leaves. Without the tongue and long lower lip, those same leaves would be hard to pick off the tree tops.

The giraffe's coat is covered with yellow and brown spots. Its coat helps the giraffe to blend in with trees and tall grasses in the wild. No two giraffes have exactly the same pattern of spots on their coats. In the wild, giraffes live together in herds of 5 to 45 animals. Giraffes are quiet, peaceful animals that are favorites of children all over the world.
The Sioux: Buffalo Hunters

The Sioux are a Native American tribe. Many years ago, they lived in what is now North Dakota and South Dakota. The Sioux were buffalo hunters. They did not live in one place. They moved to follow the buffalo. The Sioux lived in tents called tipis. They took their tipis with them when they moved. Whole villages traveled together.

The buffalo was very important to the Sioux. They used every part of the buffalo. Many meals were made from buffalo meat. Buffalo skin was used in two ways. One way was to tan it. Tanning made the skin soft. Then it could be used like cloth. Another way to use buffalo skin was to turn it into rawhide. Rawhide was as hard as leather. It could be used to make drums or bags.

The Sioux slept on buffalo hides. Buffalo hair was woven into belts or ropes. Buffalo bones were used to make tools and toys. A buffalo’s stomach could be made into a pot. The Sioux believed that the buffalo’s tongue was special. They kept it to use in tribal ceremonies. Even buffalo droppings were saved. They were used for campfire fuel.
Cesar Chavez: Champion of Migrant Farm Workers

Cesar Chavez was born in 1927. He lived in Yuma, Arizona, with his family. His grandfather had come to the U.S. from Mexico in 1880. He hoped for a better life for his family. Cesar’s father was a farmer. He worked hard to grow crops on his own land. He also ran the general store.

In 1937, the Chavez family did not have enough money to pay taxes on their land. So they lost their farm. The family was forced to move. The family became migrant farm workers. Migrant workers follow the crops. They go from place to place. Farm owners hire these workers to pick ripe fruit. Migrant farm work was hard. The farmers lived in shacks. They did not have running water. Some migrant workers lived in their pick-up trucks. Some children had to work and did not go to school. Other children changed schools many times. Cesar Chavez went to more than 30 schools in nine years.

Most of the farm workers spoke only Spanish. The farm owners spoke only English. It was hard for them to talk to each other. Cesar saw that some farm owners did not treat the workers well. The farm owners did not pay well. They did not give the workers a decent place to live.

Cesar grew up to be a leader of migrant farm workers. He helped them to learn to read and write in English. He helped them to become U.S. citizens. Cesar started a farm workers union. He led a strike against the farm owners. A strike is refusing to work until people do what you want. Cesar made the owners work with the union. Cesar used strikes and boycotts to help the workers. A boycott is when people refuse to buy something. The farm owners finally agreed to pay better wages. The owners also gave workers better housing. Cesar Chavez fought very hard to bring a better life to migrant farm workers.

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Scott Joplin: Father of Ragtime Music

Scott was born in Texas in 1868. He came from a musical family. His parents played music as a hobby. Scott’s mother played the banjo. His father played the fiddle. Not many black men made a living playing music in those days. Scott’s parents hoped things would be different for Scott.

Scott’s mother cleaned houses for a living. She took Scott to work with her. Scott played the piano in the houses where she worked. He liked to play songs by Stephen Foster. Scott’s mother worked hard to pay for his piano lessons. In those days, there were not many schools for black children. Scott did not go to school until he was a teenager. But he worked very hard. Scott played the piano every day. When Scott was 17, he left home to get a job. He played piano in St. Louis at the Silver Dollar Saloon. When Scott was 28 years old, he went to college to study music.

Scott played a kind of music called ragtime. It had a bouncy rhythm. Ragtime was first called “ragged time.” People thought it sounded like a piece of torn, ragged paper. Scott became friends with John Stark. John was a white man. It was unusual at that time for a black man and a white man to be friends. John helped Scott publish his music. They published more than 50 songs. “Maple Leaf Rag” was the most famous. It was published in 1899. “Maple Leaf Rag” was the first piece of sheet music to sell 1 million copies.

Scott also wrote two operas. The first one was called “A Guest of Honor.” The original music score was lost. It has never been found. The second opera was named “Treemonisha.” It was performed only one time, in 1915. Scott died two years later. He was buried in an unmarked grave. Fifty-seven years after his death, “Treemonisha” was performed again. Everyone who saw the opera loved it. It is considered to be the first American opera. “Treemonisha” was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1976.

Today, Scott Joplin’s grave has a headstone. It reads “American Composer.”
Level 4 Practice Passages

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402 The Giant Panda: The World's Best-Loved Animal
403 Blankets of Air Above Us
404 Super Waves
405 Tigers: The Largest Cats
406 The Great Wall of China: The Longest Graveyard
407 Water Bugs: Aquatic Insects
408 The Moon: Is It Really Made of Green Cheese?
409 Hummingbirds: Small and Fast
410 The Koala: Is It a Bear?
411 Bats: Flying Creatures of the Night
412 Hero Street U.S.A.: Home to U.S. Veterans
413 Gabriela Mistral: Teacher and Nobel Prize-Winning Author
414 Baboons: The Biggest Monkeys
415 Wilbur and Orville Wright: The Flying Brothers
416 Hurricanes: Harmful Storms
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418 The Five Oceans of the World
419 The London Bridge: From England to Arizona
420 The Hopi: Native Americans of the Southwest
421 Crispus Attucks: African American Patriot
422 The Azores: Portuguese Islands
423 Olympic Sports: An Ancient Beginning
424 Native North Americans: The First Settlers
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Wind: Friend or Foe?

Wind is moving air. The air around the earth is always moving. That is because the earth is continually spinning. When the sun heats the air, it becomes lighter. Lighter air moves more quickly. Lighter, hotter air becomes strong wind. How hot or cold the air is determines how quickly it moves. Winds are always blowing somewhere on the earth.

Wind can be a big help to us. There are many examples of how wind is helpful. Wind power pumps water from wells deep in the earth. Wind power also generates electricity. Windmills in Holland have kept the seawater from flooding low areas of the small country. Wind helps power sailboats and makes kites fly. Wind also cools us on hot, summer days.

But the wind can also be harmful. Strong winds in storms can damage buildings. Winds spinning in a tornado have destroyed parts of towns and cities. They have also killed many people. Hurricane winds form over warm waters. They blow into the land from the sea and cause great property damage and loss of life. Wind that has been warmed by forest fire becomes stronger. It blows the fire over larger areas of trees.

Forest fires and their winds cause many trees to burn and many animals, houses, and people to be harmed.

We will always have wind because of the air surrounding our earth. Sometimes the wind is helpful to us. But at other times, wind can be harmful.
The Giant Panda: The World's Best-Loved Animal

The giant panda bear is a favorite of many people. Giant pandas are black and white animals. They are big and furry. They are cute and fun to watch. Pandas live in China. They live in bamboo forests. The bamboo forests grow in the mountains of southwest China.

The giant pandas eat bamboo. They only eat one kind of bamboo. This type of bamboo can suddenly grow flowers. The bamboo flowers for no reason at all. No one knows why or when the flowers will grow. It can happen anytime. The bamboo may flower once every ten years. Or it may go many more years without flowering. After the bamboo flowers, it dies. This happens all at once. Then the bamboo forests all over China die. This is very bad for the giant panda. It takes many months for the bamboo to grow again. Without bamboo, the giant pandas have no food. Many of the giant pandas die of hunger.

Only about 1,000 giant pandas live in the world. This is not a big number. Pandas are in danger. They may become extinct. That means that pandas would no longer exist. The next time the bamboo flowers, many pandas may not survive. People want to help the giant pandas. They study bamboo forests. They try to learn more about the giant panda. The people of China set aside large areas of land. This land is to grow bamboo for the giant pandas. No one can live in these areas. The Chinese people hope that they can help the giant pandas. No one wants the panda to become extinct.
Blankets of Air Above Us

Blankets on our beds help keep us warm at night. Our earth has blankets of air that do the same thing. In the atmosphere above us, there are four blankets of air that help keep us warm and safe on Earth.

The first blanket of air closest to Earth is called the troposphere. The troposphere is where we live. It contains the air we breathe and the warmth we need. The troposphere has most of our weather in it. Seventy-five percent of the atmosphere’s total mass is found in this layer. It also has most of the water vapor of the atmosphere. The seasons of the earth occur in this first layer.

The second blanket of air in our atmosphere is the stratosphere. The stratosphere has a very important part that protects us. That part is the ozone layer. The ozone part of the stratosphere keeps the sun’s harmful rays away from the earth. The stratosphere does not have much moisture. Therefore, it does not have many clouds. For that reason, airline pilots like to fly in the stratosphere.

The third blanket of air is the coldest layer in the atmosphere. It is called the mesosphere. Its name means “in between.” The mesosphere becomes colder as its altitude increases. There are many strong winds in the mesosphere. These winds blow from west to east in the winter. In the summer, they blow from east to west.

The last layer of air around our earth is called the thermosphere. Its name means “warm place.” It is the highest and the largest layer. This layer is very hot. Its temperature can be thousands and thousands of degrees. It is made up of gases. These gases have temperatures which vary. At the top of the thermosphere is where space begins.

The atmosphere of our earth is made up of these four blankets of air. Each one of them is important for life on Earth.
When people see waves on an ocean or on a lake, they may think of surfboards and wave runners. They probably don’t give much thought to how strong those waves are. They also may not think about the changes those waves are bringing about. Every wave that comes ashore brings some change with it.

Winds start the waves. Winds that blow across the seas make the waves. The waves move across the surface of the seas until they meet the land or shoreline. When the waves meet the shoreline, they may change. For example, if the winds are blowing strongly, the waves will be very big. The big waves come crashing into the coast and bring a lot of power with them. The powerful waves continually pound the rocks on the land into small pieces. They do this again and again. The smaller pieces of rock end up on the floor of the ocean. The waves also take dirt and sand from one shore and move it to another shoreline. The waves and the wind are constantly changing the shoreline. In one place, they remove land and rocks. In another, they add to the land. The winds and the waves they create are powerful change forces on our shores. People try to build walls and barriers to stop them, but usually the wind and the waves win the battle.