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Grade 8 Reading Warm Ups

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Fun

By Suzanne Britt Jordon

Fun is hard to have.

Fun is a rare jewel.

Somewhere along the line people got the modern idea that fun was there for the asking, that people deserved fun, that if we didn't have a little fun every day we would turn into (sakes alive!) puritans.

"Was it fun?" became the question that overshadowed all other questions: good questions like: Was it moral? Was it kind? Was it honest? Was it beneficial? Was it generous? Was it necessary? And (my favorite) was it selfless?

When the pleasure got to be the main thing, the fun fetish was sure to follow. Everything was supposed to be fun. If it wasn't fun, then we were going to make it fun, or else.

Think of all the things that got the reputation of being fun. Family outings were supposed to be fun. Education was supposed to be fun. Work was supposed to be fun. Walt Disney was supposed to be fun. Church was supposed to be fun. Staying fit was supposed to be fun.

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Just to make sure that everybody knew how much fun we were having, we put happy faces on flunking test papers, dirty bumpers, sticky refrigerator doors, bathroom mirrors.

If a kid, looking at his very happy parents traipsing through that very happy Disney World, said, "This ain't fun, ma," his ma's heart sank. She wondered where she had gone wrong. Everybody told her what fun family outings to Disney World would be. Golly gee, what was the matter?

Fun got to be such a big thing that everybody started to look for more and more thrilling ways to supply it. One way was to step up the level of danger so that you could be sure that, no matter what, you would manage to have a little fun.

Television commercials brought a lot of fun and fun-loving folks into the picture. Everything that people in those commercials did looked like fun: taking Polaroid snapshots, buying insurance, mopping the floor, bowling, taking aspirin. The more commercials people watched, the more they wondered when the fun would start in their own lives. It was pretty depressing.

Big occasions were supposed to be fun. Christmas, Thanksgiving and Easter were obviously supposed to be fun. Your wedding day was supposed to be fun. Your honeymoon was supposed to be the epitome of fundom. And so we ended up going through every Big Event we ever celebrated, waiting for the fun to start.

It occurred to me, while I was sitting around waiting for the fun to start, that not much is, and that I should tell you just in case you're worried about your fun capacity.

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I don't mean to put a damper on things. I just mean we ought to treat fun reverently. It is a mystery. It cannot be caught like a virus. It cannot be trapped like an animal. The god of mirth is paying us back for all those years of thinking fun was everywhere by refusing to come to our party. I don't want to blaspheme fun anymore. When fun comes in on little dancing feet, you probably won't be expecting it. In fact, I bet it comes when you're doing your duty, your job, or your work. It may even come on a Tuesday.

I remember one day, long ago, on which I had an especially good time. Pam Davis and I walked to the College Village drug store one Saturday morning to buy some candy. We were about 12 years old. She got her Bit-O-Honey. I got my malted milk balls, chocolate stars, Chunkys, and a small bag of M & M's. We started back to her house. I was going to spend the night. We had the whole day to look forward to. We had plenty of candy. It was a long way to Pam's house but every time we got weary Pam would put her hand over her eyes, scan the horizon like a sailor and say, "Oughta reach home by nightfall," at which point the two of us would laugh until we thought we couldn't stand it another minute. Then after we got calm, she'd say it again. You should have been there. It was the kind of day and friendship and occasion that made me deeply regretful that I had to grow up.

It was fun.

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1. Explain what the author means when she says, "Fun is a rare jewel."

2. When the author mentions the possibility of people turning into **puritans**, she is using this word to refer to people who
 - A. Lived a long time ago
 - B. Rarely make a mistake
 - C. Are serious and reserved
 - D. Dress in plain and dark clothing

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3. At the beginning of the essay, the author suggests that people are so concerned with having fun that they
 - A. Try to find fun in all their experiences
 - B. Spend a lot of money trying to have fun
 - C. Join groups to learn how to have fun
 - D. Avoid new experiences that may not be fun
4. Explain how the paragraph on page 3 about television commercials relates to the author's main point about fun.

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5. What is the author's point about big occasions like holidays?

- A. They go by too quickly to be enjoyed.
- B. They are not as much fun as people expect them to be.
- C. They have become too centered around money.
- D. They help us to appreciate the important events in life.

6. The author ends the essay with a childhood story. Does the childhood story do a better job persuading readers of the author's point than the other parts of the essay? Explain why or why not.

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7. The author assumes that the people reading her essay
 - A. Probably had fun going to amusement parks as children
 - B. Prefer dangerous experiences over fun activities
 - C. May be worried that they are not having enough fun
 - D. Enjoy discussing the topic of fun

8. On page 4, when the author tells us to “treat fun **reverently**,” she is encouraging us to
 - A. Look forward to having fun
 - B. Have great respect for fun
 - C. Teach others how to have fun
 - D. Have fun less frequently

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9. Describe the author's tone or voice in the essay. Use an example from the essay to support your answer.

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The following paragraph is from the essay.

Think of all the things that got the reputation of being fun. Family outings were supposed to be fun. Education was supposed to be fun. Work was supposed to be fun. Walt Disney was supposed to be fun. Church was supposed to be fun. Staying fit was supposed to be fun.

10. What is the author implying in this paragraph?

- A. It is possible to have fun in a wide range of activities.
- B. A person's reputation is based on how much fun the person has.
- C. Most daily activities are less important than we think.
- D. We should not expect everything in life to be fun.

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Paper

By Marcel G. Gagne

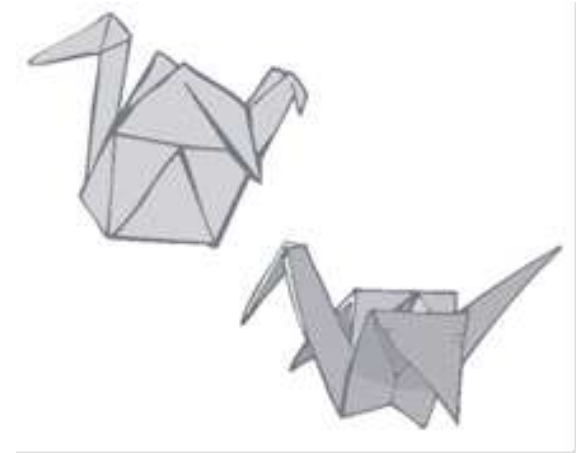
With precise folding and a touch of magic . . . beware . .

·
paper can take on a life of its own.

Fascinated, Daniel followed his grandmother's old fingers while they deftly wove magic in their mathematical dance.

Wrinkled folds of skin, draped almost casually over her old bones, moved in ways that mocked his young, but clumsy, fingers. Every motion was elegant choreography, each fold an artful rendition of an exact science. Two days of insistence had finally convinced her to share her secrets. This was the initiation. Her price was his rapt attention.

Displays of her handiwork were everywhere. A veritable menagerie of birds, fish, flowers, and even entire scenes spread throughout the house. One shelf displayed a barnyard diorama complete with pigs, horses, chickens, and a farmer watching over them all. On another shelf, she had gathered a full orchestra. Before the assembled musicians, the black-clad conductor stood on a podium, his baton held high. Other objects were strictly decorative: strange boxes and shapes of various colors. She, herself, wore a pair of earrings from which dangled two identical deep-purple birds.



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This week of forced confinement with his grandmother was turning out to be interesting after all. Daniel could almost forgive his parents for abandoning him while they took a holiday on their own.

The paper opened briefly and collapsed again under her fingers as she worked the crease to a point that had not existed before. "That's called a petal fold," she said. "This point could just as easily be one of the bird's wings as its head and tail. In a more difficult design, it could become the head and tail of a dinosaur."

A smile of wonder crossed Daniel's lips. "Yeah!" he breathed. The lumbering crash of a great beast sounded in his imagination, the mental camera panning up and down to catch the terrible gaze of the prehistoric monster. Heart-pounding background music accompanied its earsplitting roar.

"Will you do the dinosaur, Grandma? *Please.*"

"That's a little bit harder than what we're working on here. You have to walk before you can run," she said.

His smile turned to a frown. "Aw, c'mon, Lorraine!" he ventured.

Lorraine put the model down and pierced Daniel's eyes with her own. "*What* did you call me?"₁₂ The old woman held a great deal of power in those eyes. Daniel shrank beneath the steady gaze.

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"That's what Dad calls you," he explained.

"Your father is thirty years older than you are. When you get to be forty, then you can call me Lorraine, but right this minute, I am Grandma to you. Understand?"

"Now, where were we?" She carefully picked up the paper model.

"We were going to build a dinosaur," Daniel attempted. She gave a small laugh. "Nice try, but first things first. This particular fold will become the classic Japanese crane."

"But a bird is so boring. A dinosaur at least looks like it could do something."

"Birds look like they can fly. That's something, too. Let's finish this and then you can tell me if it was boring. Until then, observe."

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11. On the first page, the passage says that two days of **insistence** had finally convinced Daniel's grandmother to share her secrets. This means that for two days Daniel had
- A. Felt uncomfortable staying with his grandmother
 - B. Kept asking his grandmother over and over again
 - C. Listened to his grandmother's stories about the family
 - D. Done everything his grandmother asked him to do
12. On the first page, what does it mean when the passage says that "This was the **initiation**"?
- A. Daniel was beginning to learn how to fold paper.
 - B. Daniel had put his initials on some papers.
 - C. Daniel was invited to join a paper-folding club.
 - D. Daniel had started studying math with his grandmother.

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13. On the first page, the passage describes “a barnyard diorama **complete** with pigs, horses, chickens, and a farmer watching over them all.” This means that the diorama

- A. Had just been finished
- B. Took up a lot of space
- C. Included many details
- D. Was very decorative

14. On the first page, the passage refers to Daniel’s stay at his grandmother’s as **confinement**. This means that

- A. His grandmother’s house is old-fashioned
- B. Daniel had mixed feelings about his stay
- C. His grandmother had not been feeling well
- D. Daniel felt his freedom was limited

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15. On the second page, Daniel's grandmother tells him to **observe**. This means that she wants him
- A. Take notes
 - B. Behave himself
 - C. Watch closely
 - D. Sit quietly

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Not Just for Kids Anymore

By E. B. White

"I have a lot of the cat in me," said author E. B. White, "and cats are not joiners."

Perhaps that is why White, one of the country's greatest writers, is so hard to label. His essays for *The New Yorker* appealed to an urbane crowd, but he is best remembered for his children's books. He loved the bustle of New York City, but was happy raising chickens on a Maine farm. And just when critics thought they had him pegged as a benign satirist, he'd write a biting condemnation of the dangers of technology.

The son of a piano manufacturer, Elwyn Brooks White was born in Mount Vernon, New York, in 1899. His family was prosperous, and White was raised with the mix of sophistication and common sense that would mark his writing.

After graduation from Cornell University, White spent a year as a newspaper reporter in New York City, then decided to drive across the country with a friend in a Model T Ford. The trip gave White a lifetime of anecdotes, and spawned a legend or two. "When they ran out of money," White's friend, James Thurber, noted, "they played for their supper—and their gasoline—on a fascinating musical instrument that White had made out of some pieces of wire and an old shoe."



E. B. White and Minnie, his dachshund, at *The New Yorker* offices in the late 1940s.

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When White returned to New York City in the mid-1920s, he spent a few years bouncing between advertising jobs and unemployment before trying his hand again at writing. Borrowing his brother's typewriter, he began pounding out sketches and poems. On a lark, he sent some essays to a fledgling magazine called *The New Yorker*. Since its founding in 1925, the magazine had struggled to find its niche, and White's work helped put *The New Yorker* on the map. His essays were funny and sophisticated; they spoke equally to socialites and cab drivers, professors and plumbers. Through his essays, which he wrote for nearly 50 years, White helped give *The New Yorker* its voice and identity.

In 1945, already a leading literary figure, White embarked on his second career: writing children's books. He moved from New York to a farm in Maine, where he raised chickens and geese. Seeking a way to amuse his nieces and nephews, White started to write stories for them. "Children were always after me to tell them a story and I found I couldn't do it," he said. "So I had to get it down on paper."

A vivid dream about a mouselike character led to *Stuart Little*. Then, in 1952, White published *Charlotte's Web*. The book, which was inspired by White's own farm animals, is arguably the most famous children's story published in the 20th century.

By the time he died from Alzheimer's disease in 1985, White's essays had appeared in more college anthologies than those of any other writer. Many said his essays matched his personality: subtle without being simple, critical without being mean.

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Indeed, one New York Times critic wrote, "There are times reading an E. B. White book of essays when you think he must be the most likable man of letters alive. If you are some kind of writer yourself, you probably want to imitate him."

From LITERARY CAVALCADE, April 2000 issue. Copyright © 2000 by Scholastic Inc. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic Inc.

Twins

by E. B. White

On a warm, miserable morning last week we went up to the Bronx Zoo to see the moose calf and to break in a new pair of black shoes. We encountered better luck than we had bargained for. The cow moose and her young one were standing near the wall of the deer park below the monkey house, and in order to get a better view we strolled down to the lower end of the park, by the brook. The path there is not much traveled. As we approached the corner where the brook trickles under the wire fence, we noticed a red deer getting to her feet. Beside her, on legs that were just learning their business, was a spotted fawn, as small and perfect as a trinket seen through a reducing glass. They stood there, mother and child, under a gray beech whose trunk was engraved with dozens of hearts and initials. Stretched on the ground was another fawn, and we realized that the doe had just finished twinning. The second fawn was still wet, still unrisen. Here was a scene of rare sylvan splendor, in one of our five favorite boroughs, and we couldn't have asked for more. Even our new shoes seemed to be working out all right and weren't hurting much.

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The doe was only a couple of feet from the wire, and we sat down on a rock at the edge of the footpath to see what sort of start young fawns get in the deep fastnesses of Mittel Bronx.

The mother, mildly resentful of our presence and dazed from her labor, raised one forefoot and stamped primly. Then she lowered her head, picked up the afterbirth, and began dutifully to eat it, allowing it to swing crazily from her mouth, as though it were a bunch of withered beet greens. From the monkey house came the loud, insane hooting of some captious primate, filling the whole woodland with a wild hooroar. As we watched, the sun broke weakly through, brightened the rich red of the fawns, and kindled their white spots. Occasionally, a sightseer would appear and wander aimlessly by, but of all who passed none was aware that anything extraordinary had occurred. "Looka the kangaroos!" a child cried. And he and his mother stared sullenly at the deer and then walked on.

In a few moments the second twin gathered all his legs and all his ingenuity and arose, to stand for the first time sniffing the mysteries of a park for captive deer. The doe, in recognition of his achievement, quit her other work and began to dry him, running her tongue against the grain and paying particular attention to the key points. Meanwhile the first fawn tiptoed toward the shallow brook, in little stops and goes, and started across. He paused midstream to make a slight contribution, as a child does in bathing. Then, while his mother watched, he continued across, gained the other side, selected a hiding place, and lay down under a skunk-cabbage leaf next to the fence, in perfect concealment, his legs folded neatly under him. Without actually going out of sight, he had managed to disappear completely in the shifting light and shade. From somewhere a

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whistle sounded. We hung around awhile, but he never budged. Before we left, we crossed the brook ourself, just outside the fence, knelt, reached through the wire, and tested the truth of what we had once heard: that you can scratch a new fawn between the ears without starting him. You can indeed.

"TWINS" FROM THE SECOND TREE FROM THE CORNER by E. B. White. Copyright 1948 by E. B. White. Copyright Renewed. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins Publishers Inc. First published in *The New Yorker*, June 12, 1948.

16. Which of the following is a major idea of the biographical sketch of E. B. White?

- A. His writing was enjoyed by adults.
- B. He wrote for average readers.
- C. His writing was not easy to categorize.
- D. He was a typical children's author.

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17. On the second page, when the author of the biographical sketch says that E. B. White's essays "appealed to an **urbane** crowd," he is describing the audience for White's writing as

- A. Having sophisticated tastes
- B. Leading busy lives
- C. Being politically conservative
- D. Having a good sense of humor

18. Explain what the essay "Twins" shows about E. B. White as a person. Support your answer with details from both the essay and the biographical sketch.

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19. On the third page, the author of the biographical sketch notes that E. B. White's cross-country trip gave him "a lifetime of **anecdotes**." The author is pointing out that on the trip White

- A. Caught a life-threatening illness
- B. Had many experiences to talk about
- C. Made several very good friends
- D. Learned to get by on little money

20. Why did E. B. White want to go to the Bronx Zoo?

- A. To pet the twin fawns
- B. To amuse his nieces and nephews
- C. To watch the sightseers
- D. To see a moose calf

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21. Explain why the setting of a zoo in a city helps to make E. B. White's essay "Twins" more effective.

22. Using details from the essay "Twins," explain what E. B. White means when he says, "We encountered better luck than we had bargained for."

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The following is from the first paragraph of the essay "Twins."

They stood there, mother and child, under a gray beech whose trunk was engraved with dozens of hearts and initials.

23. What does the sentence imply?

- A. E. B. White is sympathetic to parents and children.
- B. The deer were hiding from E. B. White and the other sightseers.
- C. E. B. White is aware of both nature and the urban setting.
- D. The graffiti interferes with E. B. White's enjoyment of the scene.

24. How do you think E. B. White feels by the end of his visit to the zoo? Support your answer with reference to the essay.

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The following is from the essay "Twins."

Occasionally, a sightseer would appear and wander aimlessly by, but of all who passed none was aware that anything extraordinary had occurred. "Looka the kangaroos!" a child cried. And he and his mother stared sullenly at the deer and then walked on.

25. In these sentences, E. B. White is mainly

- A. Showing how much he knows about animals in the zoo
- B. Contrasting his experience with that of the other sightseers
- C. Showing that he enjoys the reactions of children
- D. Comparing the reactions of children and adults

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1920: Women Get the Vote

By Sam Roberts

The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920, after decades of campaigning by the women's suffrage movement.

When John Adams and his fellow patriots were mulling independence from England in the spring of 1776, Abigail Adams famously urged her husband to "remember the ladies and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors." Otherwise, she warned, "we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice or representation."

That summer, the Declaration of Independence proclaimed that all men are created equal but said nothing of women's equality. It would take another

144 years before the U.S. Constitution was amended, giving women the right to vote in every state.

That 19th Amendment says simply: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." It took effect after a dramatic ratification battle in Tennessee in which a 24-year-old legislator cast the deciding vote.

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The amendment was a long time coming. At various times, women could run for public office in some places, but could rarely vote. (As far back as 1776, New Jersey allowed women property owners to vote, but rescinded that right three decades later.)

"WOMANIFESTO"

The campaign for women's rights began in earnest in 1848 at a Women's Rights convention in Seneca Falls, N.Y., organized by 32-year-old Elizabeth Cady Stanton and other advocates. Stanton had drafted a "Womanifesto" patterned on the Declaration of Independence, but the one resolution that shocked even some of her supporters was a demand for equal voting rights, also known as universal suffrage. "I saw clearly," Stanton later recalled, "that the power to make the laws was the right through which all other rights could be secured."

Stanton was joined in her campaign by Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth, Lucretia Mott, and other crusaders who would become icons of the women's movement. Some were militant. Many were met with verbal abuse and even violence. Already active in the antislavery movement and temperance campaigns (which urged abstinence from alcohol), women often enlisted in the fight for voting rights too.



More than 20,000 marchers took part in this 1915 parade in New York City in support of women's suffrage.

Courtesy of Library of Congress #LC-USZ62-50393

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WYOMING IS FIRST

They staged demonstrations, engaged in civil disobedience, began legal challenges, and pressed their case state by state. In 1869, the Wyoming Territory gave women the vote, with the first permanent suffrage law in the nation. ("It made sense that a place like Wyoming would embrace women's rights," Gail Collins of *The New York Times* wrote in her book *America's Women*. "With very few women around, there was no danger that they could impose their will on the male majority.")

In 1878, a constitutional amendment was introduced in Congress. The legislation languished for nine years. In 1887, the full Senate considered the amendment for the first time and defeated it by about 2-to-1.

But the suffrage movement was slowly gaining support. With more and more women graduating from high school, going to college, and working outside the home, many Americans began asking: Why couldn't women vote too?

Plenty of opposition existed, according to Collins: Democrats feared women would vote for more socially progressive Republicans. The liquor industry, afraid of prohibition, also opposed women's suffrage, as did many people in the South, where blacks had been largely disenfranchised since Reconstruction.

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In 1918, after much cajoling and picketing by suffragists, President Woodrow Wilson changed his mind and backed the amendment. The next year, both houses of Congress voted to amend the Constitution. Suffrage advocates predicted quick ratification by the states. (By 1919, 28 states permitted women to vote, at least for President.) Within a little more than a year, 35 of the required 36 states had voted for ratification.

The last stand for anti-suffragists was in Tennessee in the summer of 1920. Their showdown in the State Legislature became known as the "War of the Roses." (Pro-amendment forces sported yellow roses; the antis wore red.)

After two roll calls, the vote was still tied, 48-48. On the third, Harry T. Burn, a Republican and, at 24, the youngest member of the legislature, switched sides. He was wearing a red rose but voted for ratification because he had received a letter from his mother that read, in part: "Hurrah and vote for suffrage! Don't keep them in doubt!"

Burn said later: "I know that a mother's advice is always safest for her boy to follow and my mother wanted me to vote for ratification. I appreciated the fact that an opportunity such as seldom comes to mortal man-to free 17,000,000 women from political slavery-was mine."

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GRADUAL CHANGE

In 1920, women across America had the right to vote in a presidential election. (In the South, black women and men would be kept off voter rolls in large numbers until 1965, after passage of the Voting Rights Act.)

But newly enfranchised women voted in much smaller numbers than men. "Women who were adults at that time had been socialized to believe that voting was socially inappropriate for women," says Susan J. Carroll, senior scholar at the Center for American Women and Politics.

The political and social change sought by suffragists came gradually and not without fits and starts. An Equal Rights Amendment, stipulating equal treatment of the sexes under the law, was passed by Congress and sent to the states in 1972, but later failed after being ratified by only 35 of the necessary 38 states.

In 1980, however, women surpassed men for the first time in turnout for a presidential election. Since then, there has also been a substantial rise in the number of women running for and holding political office.

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26. What is the main purpose of the article?

- A. To describe the events leading to the passage of the 19. Amendment
- B. To identify the states that first supported women's voting rights
- C. To discuss the most important leaders of the suffragist movement in the 1800s
- D. To explain why the Equal Rights Amendment has not been ratified

27. Do you think the statements by Abigail Adams in the first paragraph are an effective way to begin the article? Explain why or why not using information from the article.

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28. According to the article, women in New Jersey in the 1700s could

- A. Campaign for public office
- B. Participate in political debates
- C. Join political parties
- D. Vote if they owned property

29. According to the article, what was most surprising about the “Womanifesto”?

- A. It was written by Elizabeth Cady Stanton.
- B. It called for equal voting rights for men and women.
- C. It was based on the Declaration of Independence.
- D. It had such a large number of resolutions.

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30. On page 3, the article says that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony would become **icons** of the women's movement. This means that the two women would

- A. Become religious leaders
- B. Be pictured on the "Womanifesto" document
- C. Become important symbols of the movement
- D. Be ready to sacrifice everything for the movement

31. According to the article, what is one way that women fought for equal rights in the 1800s?

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32. In describing the women's suffrage movement, the author uses such words as "battle," "militant," and "showdown." Do you think this is an effective way to describe the women's suffrage movement? Support your answer with two references to the article.

33. On page 3, the article says that women in the suffrage movement "**pressed** their case state by state." This means that the women

- A. Spoke with newspaper reporters in many states
- B. Strongly urged the states to pass women's suffrage
- C. Traveled in large groups together from state to state
- D. Introduced the idea of women's suffrage to the states

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34. In her book, *America's Women*, what did Gail Collins suggest was the reason that the Wyoming Territory passed the first permanent suffrage law?

- A. Because the small number of women there would not have had much political influence
- B. Because the suffragist movement was very active in the western United States
- C. Because most politicians there chose not to vote on that resolution
- D. Because it was important for women to have the vote in such a dangerous area

35. The Section "Wyoming Is First" describes changes in United States society in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Choose one of these changes and explain its effect on women's progress in getting the vote.

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36. How do you think the women of the suffragist movement might feel about the events described in the last section of the article, “Gradual Change”? Explain your opinion with an example from the article.

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Tech-Trash Tragedy

By Liam O'Donnell

In our wired world, technology moves at a laser-fast pace. Every day, a new gadget arrives and promises to bring us the future, today. In the race for faster computers and more-powerful gadgets, it's easy to forget about yesterday's high-tech wonders.

Unfortunately, used computers and gadgets end up in landfills across the country. Each year, we throw away 12 million computers. And that is not good news for the environment. To make our gadgets work, many of them use materials like lead and mercury. When mercury and lead end up in a landfill, they spread poisons into the earth, water, and air for miles around. This is called e-waste—and it's becoming a big pollution problem around the world.

Big problems call for big solutions, so adults and kids from dozens of countries are working hard to clean up our e-waste. And you can help, too.

Turning Old Into New

The trick to stopping e-waste is to catch it before it gets into the landfill. That's why some seventh-grade students at a school in Michigan organized a computer drop-off event. They put up posters and spread the word around the town, telling people to bring out their old computers.

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And the people got the message. They dropped off dozens of old computers, monitors, and printers at the school. Craig Greshaw, the school's computer teacher who helped organize the event, believes that knowing about computers goes beyond surfing the Web. "Part of that is learning about the chemicals inside the computers and what needs to be done with them to keep them safe," he told the town newspaper during the recycling drive. With their school gym filled with old computers, the students were ready for the next step in cleaning up the high-tech trash: turning old computers into new ones.

That's where companies like RePC step in. The Seattle company takes e-waste and turns it into e-gold. "Almost all of the parts of a computer can be reused or recycled," says Mark Dabek, owner of RePC. Any computer parts that can't be reused or sold get recycled in a way that won't hurt the environment. "The circuit boards are sent to a circuit board recycler that chops them and sends them to a facility with a very, very hot furnace called 'the reactor,'" Dabek says. After the computer parts are safely crushed and burned, their raw materials can be reused to make everything from appliances to office buildings.

Sometimes you can make a new computer from the parts of an old computer. Called refurbishing, it's what the tech whizzes at RePC do best. Buying a refurbished computer is a lot cheaper than buying a new one. But who wants a computer made up of old parts?

A lot of people, actually. Places like schools and community centers are often short on cash, but need computers to help them get things done. Robert Sterling, a computer teacher at a high school in California, uses computers donated from local businesses to motivate students and teach them about recycling. "If kids learn to recycle everything," says Sterling, "they will set a good example for

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Recycling old computers is big business, and there are many other companies like RePC across the country. Many big charities have computer-recycling programs too, but be sure to call them first before you drop off any equipment.

Computers aren't the only technology that can be reused. Last year, schools in New Mexico gave old cell phones a new lease on life while also helping to raise money for charity. The students collected eleven garbage bags of old cell phones, sold them to a cell phone refurbishing company, donated the money to charity, and helped keep the environment clean—all at the same time.

Building a Greener Future

Some computer makers are tackling tech trash by designing more environmentally responsible products. More new computers are made with recycled plastic and use less electricity. Many also have no lead in their circuits, which makes them less damaging to the environment. The same goes for those new flat monitors. Not only do they look cool, but they also use less-harmful chemicals.

Computers are an important part of our wired world. It's up to us to make sure that they don't pollute our planet. Talking to others about e-waste is a great way to

start tackling the problem. Speak to your teacher about organizing a computer collection drive at your school. Next time your baseball team is raising money, try collecting old cell phones. By working together for a clean future, we can make e-waste a thing of the past.

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37. Using information from the article, explain what e-waste is and why it is a problem.

38. Which of the following does the author primarily use to persuade his readers to help fight e-waste?

- A. Real-world examples
- B. Interviews with scientists
- C. Comparison and contrast
- D. Historical context

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39. Does the author present a convincing argument that recycling is the best solution to the problem of e-waste? Explain why or why not.

40. On page 2, the article says that Craig Greshaw thinks that “knowing about computers goes beyond surfing the Web.” What does Greshaw mean by this? Explain your answer using information from the article.

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41. On page 3, the article says that Robert Sterling uses donated computers to **motivate** his students. This means he uses these computers to

- A. Communicate more easily with his students
- B. Keep track of his students' progress
- C. Encourage his students to be more involved
- D. Teach his students new concepts and strategies

42. On page 3, the article says that some computer makers are designing more "environmentally **responsible** products." This means that the products are

- A. Able to adapt to the environment
- B. Required to help the environment
- C. Made from natural materials
- D. Less likely to harm the environment

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43. Based on what you have read in this article, do you think the problem of tech trash will be difficult to solve? Explain your answer using two references to the article.

44. According to the article, what is another benefit of recycling e-waste besides helping the environment?

- A. Recycling makes computers easier to build.
- B. Recycling can help raise funds for good causes.
- C. Recycling helps improve current technology.
- D. Recycling improves government services.

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45. The title of this article is “Tech-Trash Tragedy.” Does the article persuade you that the problem of tech trash is a “tragedy”? Explain why or why not.

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Alligator Poem

By Mary Oliver

I knelt down
at the edge of the water,
and if the white birds standing
in the tops of the trees whistled any warning
I didn't understand,
I drank up to the very moment it came
crashing toward me,
its tail flailing
like a bundle of swords,
slashing the grass,

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and the inside of its cradle-shaped mouth

gaping,

and rimmed with teeth—

and that's how I almost died

of foolishness

in beautiful Florida.

But I didn't.

I leaped aside, and fell,

and it streamed past me, crushing everything in its path

as it swept down to the water

and threw itself in,

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and, in the end,

this isn't a poem about foolishness

but about how I rose from the ground

and saw the world as if for the second time,

the way it really is.

The water, that circle of shattered glass,

healed itself with a slow whisper

and lay back

with the back-lit light of polished steel,

and the birds, in the endless waterfalls of the trees,

shook open the snowy pleats of their wings, and drifted away

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while, for a keepsake, and to steady myself,

I reached out,

I picked the wild flowers from the grass around me—

blue stars

and blood-red trumpets

on long green stems—

for hours in my trembling hands they glittered

like fire.

From *New and Selected Poems: Volume One* by Mary Oliver. Copyright © 1992 by Mary Oliver. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press, Boston

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46. What does the poem mainly describe?

- A. A personal experience
- B. An unusual dream
- C. The danger of alligators
- D. Traveling in Florida

47. What is the speaker doing at the beginning of the poem?

- A. Watching the birds
- B. Wading in a stream
- C. Drinking the water
- D. Picking wildflowers

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48. The following lines are from the poem.

*I drank up to the very moment it came
crashing toward me,
its tail flailing
like a bundle of swords,
slashing the grass,
and the inside of its cradle-shaped mouth
gaping,
and rimmed with teeth—*

Choose an image from these lines and explain what it shows about the speaker's experience with the alligator.

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49. After the alligator has gone, the speaker says:

*The water, that circle of shattered glass,
healed itself with a slow whisper
and lay back
with the back-lit light of polished steel,
and the birds, in the endless waterfalls of the trees,
shook open the snowy pleats of their wings, and drifted away*

Explain what these lines show about how the speaker views nature at this point in the poem.

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50. On page 3, the speaker says, “and, in the end, this isn’t a poem about foolishness.” What is the purpose of these lines in relation to the rest of the poem?

- A. To signal a turning point in the poem
- B. To emphasize the speaker’s confusion
- C. To focus the reader on the first part of the poem
- D. To show the speaker was embarrassed

51. Describe what happens to the speaker of the poem and explain what this experience makes the speaker realize.

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52. Do you think the alligator was trying to attack the speaker of the poem? Support your answer with reference to the poem.

53. Explain how “Alligator Poem” could be seen as both a good title and a bad title for the poem. Support your answer with reference to what happens in the poem.

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54. The speaker's description of flowers at the end of the poem is mainly meant to emphasize that the speaker

- A. Believes nature is unpredictable
- B. Does not understand what is happening
- C. Is reliving a frightening experience
- D. Is seeing the world with a new intensity

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Alien Invasion

In the 1930s, beetles with a sweet tooth gulped down a lot of sugarcane in Australia. Angry sugarcane farmers needed to do something quickly. Farmers in Hawaii gave them a tip: Cane toads like to munch on the beetles. Desperate Australian farmers imported a boxful of the fist-sized toads from Hawaii and let them loose.



Bad idea. Instead of chowing down on the beetles, cane toads gobbled anything they could swallow—pet food, garbage, honeybees, termites, snails, and mice.

The toads multiplied, spreading across the northern coast of Australia. Today toads are such a problem that a member of the Australian government recently suggested that citizens use golf clubs to whack the warty amphibians!

Australia isn't the only country dealing with unwelcome animal guests. In the United States, hundreds of invasive species pose a threat to the environment.

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The Aliens Are Coming

An invasive species is nonnative, or alien, to the ecosystem. An ecosystem is a group of plants, animals, and other living organisms that live together in the same area. Although invasive species don't damage their own ecosystem, they can cause massive destruction when they invade another area.

For example, fingernail-sized zebra mussels hitchhiked from Russia to the Great Lakes in the water tanks of ships. When those ships landed in the United States, the zebra mussels began gobbling up food and oxygen, leaving nothing for other underwater creatures to eat.

They also irritated humans. Each year, a female zebra mussel can produce 30,000 to 1 million eggs. When those eggs hatch, the mussels clog pipes that provide drinking water to houses and schools.

A beetle called the emerald ash borer arrived in the United States from China in wood packing material carried aboard cargo ships or airplanes.

The adult emerald ash borer nibbles on the leaves of the ash tree. The larvae of the beetle, however, cause far more damage by chomping through the inner bark of ash trees. The insects destroy the tunnels that allow water and nutrients to travel from the roots to the leaves. Emerald ash borers have killed 8 million to 10 million trees in Michigan, Ohio, and Indiana.

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Snakeheads arrived in the United States from Asia as exotic pets. When pet owners grew tired of the snakeheads, they threw the fish into nearby lakes and streams.

The snakehead fish now live in several states and can move over land from one body of water to another body. They dine greedily and can clear a pond of all its fish. The snakehead was recently spotted in a lake in Queens, N.Y., a part of New York City.

“The world has changed so much in the last 100 years,” Jodie A. Ellis, a scientist at Purdue University, told *Senior Edition*. “We are now able to share so many things with other countries, which is mostly a good thing. But there are costs, and one of those costs is the constant threat of invasive species.”

Why Should We Care?

In addition to destroying an ecosystem, the devastation caused by invasive species can be costly. In the United States, the damage caused by the pesky critters is roughly \$137 billion per year.

“Our natural ecosystems are the primary sources of our food and drinking water,” Lisa Gould, a senior scientist at the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, told *Senior Edition*. “Ecosystems help keep our air clean. They give us medicines and materials for our industries. Without them, we could not exist for long.”

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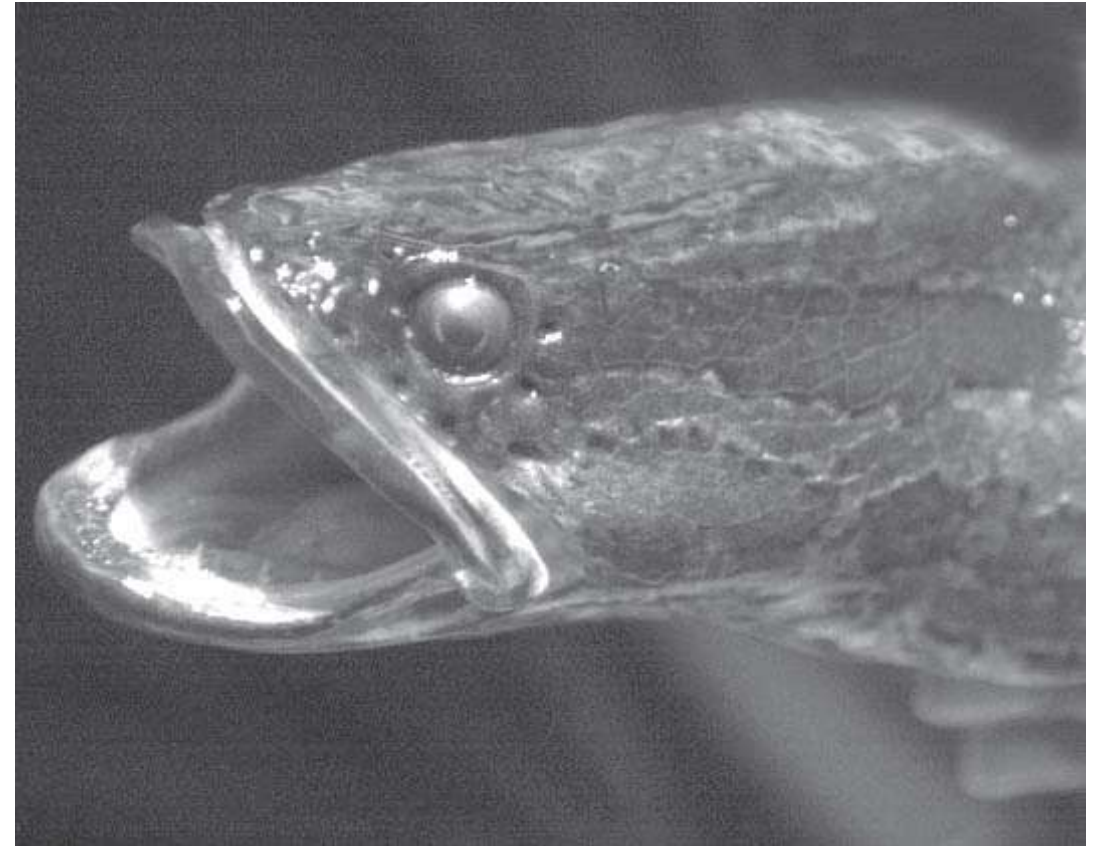
Battling the Cane Toad

Back in Australia, the government has devoted \$1 million to combating that country's pesky toad problem. Scientists are researching what kinds of poisons can kill the creature.

Wildlife officials are also setting up traps to catch the toads, which are now hitchhiking across Australia in the backs of cars and trucks.

“We cannot tolerate a situation where cane toads are getting a free ride across the continent,” says one Australian official.

“Alien Invasion” from *Weekly Reader Senior*, September 2005, copyright © 2005 by Weekly Reader Corporation. Special permission granted. All Rights Reserved.



The snakehead fish kills native fish in many waterways in the United States.

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Home on the Range

Forget about traveling to Africa to go on a safari. If some scientists have their way, people might be able to spot lions and elephants roaming the Great Plains of North America. The Great Plains lie in the center of North America, extending from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains and from Canada to Texas. A team of scientists recently proposed the bold plan to save endangered animals from extinction in Africa. Many animal habitats there are disappearing. A habitat is the place where a plant or an animal lives.

Just “Plain” Smart

Supporters of the plan say that relocating the animals to the Great Plains would help restore the region’s biodiversity (the variety of different organisms found within a geographic region) closer to what it was before humans came along.



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Most modern African animals never lived on the Great Plains. However, some other large animals, such as camels, saber-toothed cats, and mastodons, lived there thousands of years ago.

A mastodon was a furry, elephant-like creature with long tusks. Mastodons and other animals lived on the Great Plains until the last ice age ended, about 10,000 years ago. An ice age is a period of time when sheets of ice covered Earth.

Supporters of the project also say that relocating large animals to vast parks in the Great Plains could save hundreds of species in Africa and Asia that now face extinction. They say the animals could be introduced gradually on private land. Eventually, fenced animal reserves could be opened to tourists.

Bad Idea

Those against the plan argue that releasing different species into new environments can cause destruction. Cane toads, for example, brought to Australia from Hawaii to control beetles in sugarcane fields, ate everything in sight. Cattle and sheep ranchers are also concerned that the wild animals might devour their herds.

Critics of the plan say that there are already a lot of endangered animals that need protection in North America. Scientist Donald Grayson says, “Why introduce . . . camels and lions when there are North American species that could benefit from the same kind of effort?”

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55. What is the central purpose of “Alien Invasion”?

- A. To point out that invasive species come from many different countries
- B. To argue that invasive species are a serious problem that must be solved
- C. To describe the damage that invasive species cause in Australia
- D. To suggest that invasive species can be stopped only with the government’s help

56. “Alien Invasion” relies primarily on what form of evidence as support for its argument?

- A. Quotations of famous scientists
- B. Multiple definitions of invasive species
- C. A series of examples of invasive species
- D. Descriptions of different methods of control

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57. According to “Alien Invasion,” Australian farmers imported cane toads into Australia in order to

- A. Help save their native beetle populations
- B. Eat the sugarcane that was taking over their other crops
- C. Stop an alien species of beetle imported from Hawaii
- D. Eat beetles that were destroying sugarcane crops

58. Using what you read in “Alien Invasion,” explain why people should be concerned about invasive species.

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59. What is the central purpose of “Home on the Range”?

- A. To inform people about two opposing views
- B. To convince people to take a particular point of view
- C. To describe recent scientific discoveries
- D. To challenge a common belief

60. Describe a similarity and a difference between the way the two articles approach the subject of invasive species. Support your answer with references to both of the articles.

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61. In “Alien Invasion,” on page 4, an Australian official says, “We cannot tolerate a situation” where cane toads are traveling across the Australian continent. This means that the official thinks that Australians cannot

- A. Find a solution to the problem posed by cane toads
- B. Understand why cane toads are such a problem
- C. Allow the cane toads to continue causing a problem
- D. Permit the cane toad problem to become well known

62. On the last page, when “Home on the Range” talks about **vast** parks in the Great Plains, this refers to parks that

- A. Have mostly flat land
- B. Have protected sections
- C. Are owned by private citizens
- D. Are extremely large

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63. According to “Home on the Range,” some scientists think that moving African animals to the Great Plains would help improve the area’s

- A. Resistance to alien species
- B. Economy
- C. Biodiversity
- D. Research facilities

64. Explain why “Home on the Range” discusses animals that lived on the Great Plains thousands of years ago.

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65. Do you think “Alien Invasion” is an effective title for persuading readers of the article’s point of view? Support your opinion with reference to the article.

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How to Eat a Guava

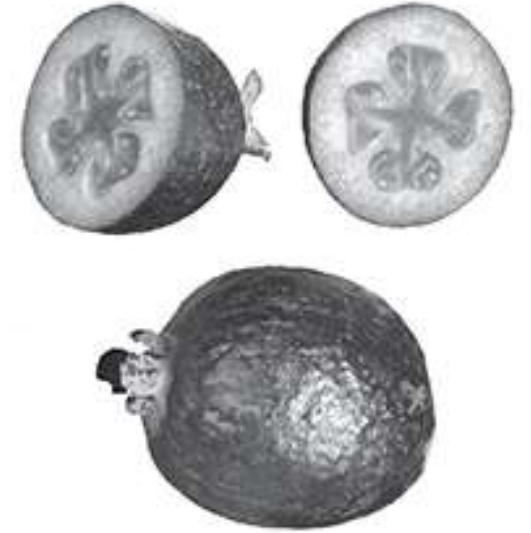
By Esmerelda Santiago

There are guavas at the Shop & Save. I pick one the size of a tennis ball and finger the prickly stem end. It feels familiarly bumpy and firm. The guava is not quite ripe; the skin is still a dark green. I smell it and imagine a pale pink center, the seeds tightly embedded in the flesh.

A ripe guava is yellow, although some varieties have a pink tinge. The skin is thick, firm, and sweet. Its heart is bright pink and almost solid with seeds. The most delicious part of the guava surrounds the tiny seeds. If you don't know how to eat a guava, the seeds end up in the crevices between your teeth.

When you bite into a ripe guava, your teeth must grip the bumpy surface and sink into the thick edible skin without hitting the center. It takes experience to do this, as it's quite tricky to determine how far beyond the skin the seeds begin.

Some years, when the rains have been plentiful and the nights cool, you can bite into a guava and not find many seeds. The guava bushes grow close to the ground, their branches laden with green then yellow fruit that seem to ripen overnight. These guavas are large and juicy, almost seedless, their roundness enticing you to have one more, just one more, because next year the rains may not come.



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As children, we didn't always wait for the fruit to ripen. We raided the bushes as soon as the guavas were large enough to bend the branch.

A green guava is sour and hard. You bite into it at its widest point, because it's easier to grasp with your teeth. You hear the skin, meat, and seeds crunching inside your head, while the inside of your mouth explodes in little spurts of sour.

You grimace; your eyes water, and your cheeks disappear as your lips purse into a tight O. But you have another and then another, enjoying the crunchy sounds, the acid taste, and the gritty texture of the unripe center. At night, your mother makes you drink castor oil, which she says tastes better than a green guava. That's when you know for sure that you're a child and she has stopped being one.

I had my last guava the day we left Puerto Rico. It was large and juicy, almost red in the center, and so fragrant that I didn't want to eat it because I would lose the smell. All the way to the airport I scratched at it with my teeth, making little dents in the skin, chewing small pieces with my front teeth, so that I could feel the texture against my tongue, the tiny pink pellets of sweet.

Today, I stand before a stack of dark green guavas, each perfectly round and hard, each \$1.59. The one in my hand is tempting. It smells faintly of late-summer afternoons and hopscotch under the mango tree. But this is autumn in New York, and I'm no longer a child.

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The guava joins its sisters under the harsh fluorescent lights of the exotic-fruit display. I push my cart away, toward the apples and pears of my adulthood, their nearly seedless ripeness predictable and bittersweet.

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66. On page 1, the author mentions seeds that are **embedded** in the flesh of the guava. She means that the seeds are

- A. Scattered evenly throughout the fruit
- B. Hollow inside their hard shells
- C. Fixed inside the flesh of the fruit
- D. Bitter in contrast to the flesh of the fruit

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67. On page 1, when the author describes the **edible** skin of the guava, she means that the skin

- A. Tastes delicious
- B. Feels hard to the touch
- C. Is dark in color
- D. Can be eaten

68. On page 1, what does the author mean when she says the branches of guava bushes are **laden** with fruit?

- A. The branches are weighed down with guavas.
- B. The branches are beginning to sprout fruit.
- C. The guavas are resting on the branches.
- D. The ripe guavas are falling off the branches.

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69. On page 1, the author talks about the roundness of guavas as “**enticing** you.” This means that the guavas

- A. Seem bigger than they are
- B. Look sweeter than they are
- C. Are difficult to eat in large amounts
- D. Look tempting to eat

70. On page 2, the author says that eating guavas can make you **grimace**. This means that you

- A. Begin to cough and choke
- B. Twist your face as if in pain
- C. Realize that you are no longer hungry
- D. Feel serious and sad

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Kid Fights Cheater Meters and Wins!

Ellie Lammer wasn't trying to spark a revolt, she just wanted a haircut. That was in the fall of 1997. Ellie was 11 years old at the time, and she was getting her tresses trimmed in her hometown of Berkeley, California. When Ellie and her mom returned to their car, they found a parking ticket stuck to the windshield. It didn't seem possible: Less than an hour earlier, Ellie had pumped an hour's worth of coins into the meter. But now the needle was at zero, and Ellie's mom owed \$20.



Feeling cheated, Ellie dropped another nickel in the meter and twisted the knob. The needle clicked over to the four-minute mark. Ellie stared at her watch while her mom watched the meter. Less than three minutes later, all of the time had expired. There it was: proof that they'd been cheated. The city tore up the ticket when Ellie's mom complained about the meter.

But the experience left Ellie wondering how many other meters were inaccurate. Six months later, she decided to find out. She'd been looking around for a good science-fair project—and that meter in Berkeley still bothered her. So armed with a bag of nickels and a stopwatch, she hit the streets.

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Ellie didn't have the time or money to test every meter, so she focused on a sample of 50 meters located in different parts of the city. To avoid inconveniencing motorists, she did her research after 6 P.M. and on Sundays, when the meters were not in use. She put in eight minutes' worth of nickels in each meter, then measured how much time it really gave.

The results were not pretty. Ellie's findings suggested that more than nine out of every ten meters in the city were inaccurate—and that every fourth parking meter was running out of time too quickly. With 3,600 parking meters in the city, that meant a lot of undeserved tickets. As Ellie wrote in her science-project report, "I learned which meters cheat you and which meters cheat the City of Berkeley. But I learned that almost all meters cheat someone, so beware."

When the science fair rolled around, Ellie presented her findings with computer-generated charts and graphs. Her classmates weren't very interested in her project. "It's not like they have to drive a car or put money in a parking meter," she explains. But her project was a huge hit with parents. More than 50 of them lined up that night to share their own parking-meter horror stories with Ellie.

After that, word about Ellie's meter project spread fast. Within a few weeks, Ellie got a call from local politician Diane Woolley. At the time, Berkeley was considering replacing its meters with more accurate digital ones. Ellie shared her findings at city hall, and the politicians were impressed. "We don't get reports this thorough when we pay consultants hundreds of thousands of dollars," one remarked. Based on Ellie's study, they decided to purchase 2,000 new meters.

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The California state legislature also decided to crack down on cheater meters. After Ellie presented her findings, they enacted "Lammer's Law," which requires California's 26 counties to test the accuracy of parking meters. Any meter found to be inaccurate must be fixed or dismantled.

California Governor Pete Wilson signed the law on November 1, 1998. At the time, he commented, "Ellie's ingenuity and dedication has earned her the gratitude of those Californians who've dug through their purses and pockets in search of exact change to feed the meters, only to return to find their cars bearing the dreaded green envelope of a parking ticket."

Ellie became a celebrity. She was in newspapers all over the country and featured on local television news during the summer and fall of 1998. CNN did a story about her. She was even a guest on the Late Show with David Letterman. "It was kind of a weird moment of being a celebrity," she says.

Ellie, who's now an eighth-grader at Martin Luther King Middle School, is proud of the work she's done. But she doesn't see meter monitoring as her life's work: "Right now I don't mind being known as the parking-meter girl, but I'm sure that later in life I'll want something different."

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71. Explain the meaning of the title “Kid Fights Cheater Meters and Wins!” Use information from the article to support your answer.

72. Choose two things Ellie Lammer did and explain what those things tell about her. Use examples from the article to support your answer.

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73. According to the article, what did Ellie learn from doing her meter project?

- A. Every fourth meter ran too quickly.
- B. Nine out of ten digital meters were accurate.
- C. 3,600 parking meters were inaccurate.
- D. Almost none of the 50 meters ran too slowly.

74. According to the article, why did Ellie do much of her research after 6 p.m.?

- A. She did not want people to learn about her project.
- B. She did not want to inconvenience motorists.
- C. She had to focus on a sample of 50 meters.
- D. She saved money because the meters cost less after 6 p.m.

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75. Why did Ellie's meter project attract so much attention? Explain why, using information from the article.
