

Close Reading

COMPREHENSION PASSAGES

DREAMSCAPE

and the Wishing Stars Con

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DREAMSCAPE

Teach a Fish to Bike

A young boy had a goldfish. The goldfish swam in its fishbowl. The fishbowl sat on a table. The table stood near a window. Everyday, the goldfish gazed out that window. It saw the young boy and his friends on their bikes. They all hollered and laughed as they raced down the street.

One day the fish had an idea. "I want to ride a bike, just like you!" it told the young boy. The boy loved the fish, so he agreed. He found a bike with one of his dolls. The goldfish jumped from its bowl and onto the bike. But riding the bike was difficult. The goldfish's fins couldn't grip the handle bars. Its tail couldn't push the pedals. And pretty soon, it was hard for the goldfish to breathe!

The boy put the goldfish back in its bowl. It cried and blubbered and looked very upset.

"I can't even ride a bike!" the goldfish whimpered. "What can I do anyway?"

The boy smiled. "You are as good as exactly one goldfish. That is an excellent thing to be! You can swim all day long underwater! I don't know many bike-riders who can do that."

1. Character Traits: How does Michael react when the goldfish wants to ride a bike?

- ☐ Michael is surprised that the fish can talk.
- ☐ Michael laughs at the thought of a fish riding a bike.
- ☐ Michael wants to make the goldfish's dream come true.
- ☐ Michael thinks the goldfish is silly for wanting to ride a bike.

Genre: Fiction

ANSWER KEY

DREAMSCAPE

1. Synonyms: The narrative point of view of this story is 3rd-Person. Which of the following best describes the narrator's view of the story?

- ☐ Since the audience only knows the "cool girls" thoughts and feelings, the narrator is acting strangely.
- ☒ Since the audience only knows Dina's thoughts and feelings, the narrator is acting strangely.
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2. Repetition: "Read the following quote from the story: 'Uh, I hang out here you here before, do you, uh, go to parks a lot? I mean, this one? 'Cause like, you here and I'm here like pretty much all the time, or like, a normal amount of time.' Which of the following best describes the word 'like' in the quote?"

- ☐ headstrong
- ☐ poetic
- ☒ nervous
- ☐ outraged

3. Setting: Which of the following is NOT a way the setting affects the plot development?

- ☐ Dina is a regular at the park, so she notices the "cool girls" right away.
- ☒ Since it's daytime at the park, the "cool girls" don't seem strange at first.
- ☐ The setting of a park makes Dina weary of the "cool girls".
- ☐ The setting of a park makes it easy for Dina to approach the "cool girls".

Write a short prediction of what you think is going to happen next:

ANSWER VARIES

NO PREP PRINT • ANSWER KEY
• 6-8 GRADE SKILLS •



ABOUT THIS PRODUCT

These close reading passages come directly from the game [Dreamscape](#) where students can build critical thinking skills while having fun!

This product includes 6 - 8 grade literacy skills and explores different genres, and writing prompts. Each grade level has a series of long and short passages that can be utilized at any given time throughout the school year.

This product includes **21 no-prep reading printables** and **14 no-prep answer key printables** that you may print and use. These printables can be used for guided reading discussions, independent work stations or while students play Dreamscape. Each page includes higher order thinking questions addressing *various reading skills at each grade level*.

Print this resource as a packet for your students to hold onto or print and distribute each page as you assign them.

Contact us with any further questions about how to implement this resource in your classroom!



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Dreamscape is a FREE base-building digital game to help kids grades 2-8 master their **reading comprehension** skills. It combines strategy, engagement, and imaginative reading passages to create a fun, *curriculum-aligned* literacy game! This platform can be utilized both in the classroom and at home, with accounts personalized to be moderated by parents, teachers, administrators, and students themselves.

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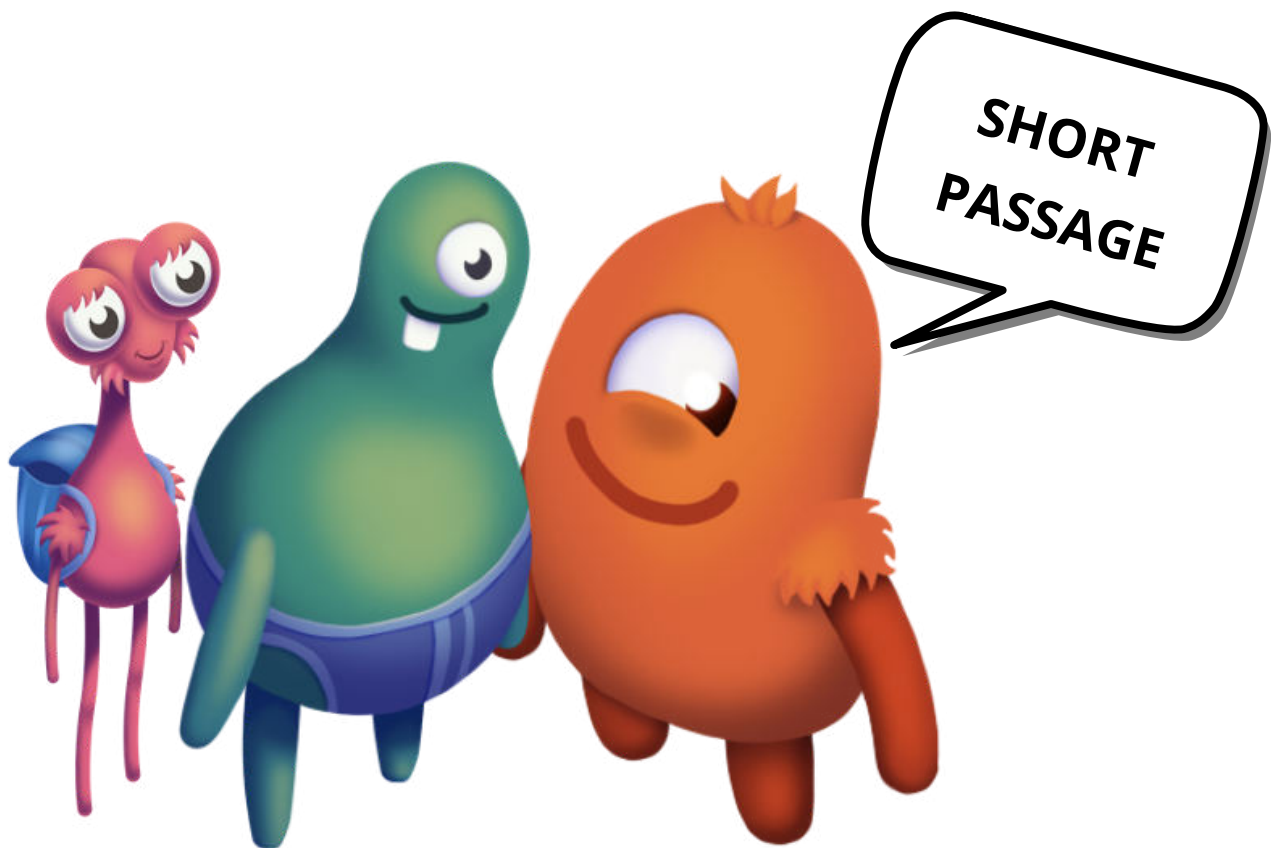
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6TH GRADE

Included in the following pages are 6th-grade skill leveled short reading passages as seen in the game Dreamscape.

Answer keys are provided directly after.



Lost In The Woods

"Nicolas sprinted through the dark and tangled brambles after the bird. The sheen of its black wings was the only thing separating it from the shadowy canopy of trees overhead. It darted quickly through the reaching branches, but Nicolas watched it sharply. He was so focused on keeping the bird in his sight as he ran that he didn't notice a root sticking up at his feet. It caught the toe of his boot as he passed and he went tumbling through the crooked trees.

After a moment, he got to his feet. He looked all around him but nothing looked familiar. The bird was gone. The forest was silent. Nicolas was lost."

1. Inferring: How do you think Nicolas feels at the end of the passage? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Confused
- ☐ Self-assured
- ☐ Scared
- ☐ Frustrated

3. Visualizing: Why was the sheen of the bird's wings the only thing separating it from the "shadowy canopy of trees overhead"?

- ☐ Because the birds wings were all black, just like the shadows
- ☐ Because the birds wings were all green, just like the trees' leaves
- ☐ Because the bird had strange, leaf-like wings
- ☐ Because Nicolas could not see details very well without his glasses

2. Mood: What mood does the author create at the end of the passage?

- ☐ Whimsical
- ☐ Celebratory
- ☐ Spooky
- ☐ Somber

4. Summarizing: What was Nicolas trying to do when he fell?

- ☐ Chase a bird through the woods
- ☐ Look for some specific trees in the forest
- ☐ Find his missing friend
- ☐ Find a rare type of creature or animal

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Sad Ghost

Some legends say that Padma's ghost cries because she lost her true love. But I think she cries because she lost her favorite hat.

1. Close Reading: The legends say that Padma's ghost cries because_____.

- ☐ We don't know.
- ☐ She lost her hat.
- ☐ She lost her true love.
- ☐ She stubbed her toe.

2. Close Reading: Why does the narrator think that Padma's ghost cries?

- ☐ She lost her true love.
- ☐ She lost her coat.
- ☐ We don't know.
- ☐ She lost her favorite hat.

3. Write 2 - 3 short sentences giving your opinion on whether or not you believe ghosts cry or not:

ANSWER KEY

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ANSWER VARIES

The Happy Prince

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "so we will live here all the year round." The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver.

1. Personification: What does the line "the Frost painted all the trees silver" mean?

- ☐ The trees all turned into precious metal.
- ☐ Ice formed over all of the trees.
- ☐ The Frost painted a picture of the garden.
- ☐ The Frost covered all the trees in silver paint.

2. Personification: Which of the following phrases demonstrate the use of personification? Select all that apply.

- ☐ "The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak."
- ☐ "Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds."
- ☐ "It slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep."
- ☐ "The Frost painted all the trees silver."

3. Give an example of personification in 2 - 3 short sentences:

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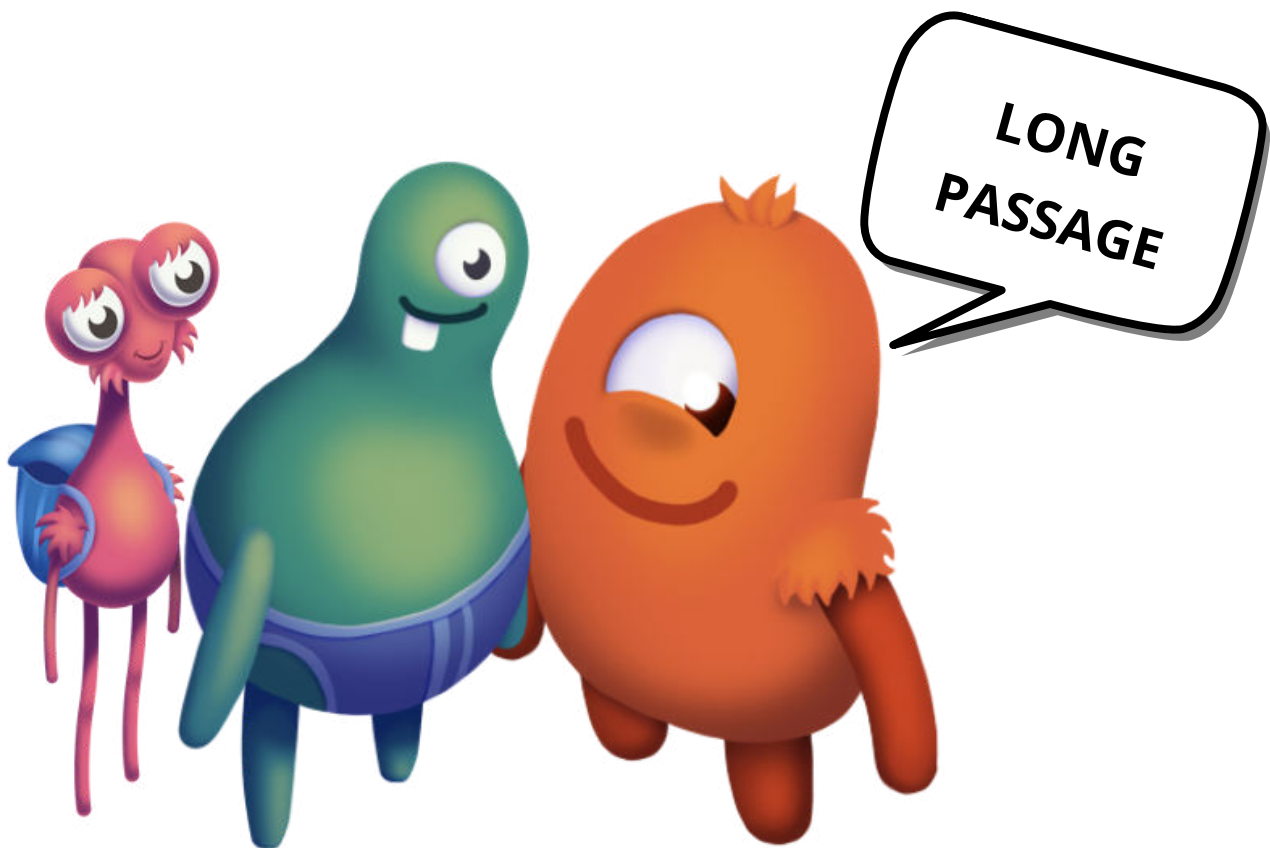
3. **Give an example of personification in 2 - 3 short sentences:**

ANSWER VARIES

6TH GRADE

Included in the following pages are 6th-grade skill leveled long reading passages as seen in the game Dreamscape.

Answer keys are provided directly after.



Jeremy and the Wishing Stars

"Jeremy lived in a very tall building, in the middle of a very large city. At night, he could see all kinds of twinkling lights through the window of his twenty-third floor apartment. But Jeremy couldn't see a single star in the sky.

When Jeremy was very young, his mother had taught him to say, "Star-light, star-bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish I wish tonight." But whenever he gazed up at the night sky, even if he concentrated with all his might, he couldn't see a single star.

Jeremy's mother explained that the lights of the city are so bright that the stars fade into the background, and become very difficult to see. "But then how do kids in the city make wishes?" Jeremy asked. His mother thought about it for a while, and then said, "You just have to be a little more creative."

After that, Jeremy began finding stars all over the place. But instead of looking up, towards the empty night sky, he gazed down at the city, through his twenty-third floor window. The city, he found, was actually full of stars, after all. You just have to be a little more creative.

Jeremy made wishes on the blinking lights of airplanes, and on the blinking lights on the tops of tall buildings. He made wishes on the headlights of cars on the freeway (although these were more like shooting stars). And he made wishes on the lights of the city streets, on windy nights when the treetops danced with the lampposts far below his twenty-third floor window.

Jeremy and the Wishing Stars Continued

Jeremy decided that he was actually pretty lucky to live in the city. "The city is so big and the sky is so small," he thought to himself. For the little patch of sky that he could see between the tall buildings looked no bigger than a postage stamp. Jeremy figured that there were definitely more stars in the city than you could possibly fit into that tiny patch of sky.

Then, one day, Jeremy's mother announced that his family was going on a camping trip in the country. Jeremy didn't like the sound of that idea one bit. He had lived in the city his whole life, and had never been to the country. He didn't want to leave his twenty-third floor apartment, and all of the twinkling stars of the city.

But, no matter how much he whined, and no matter how much he begged, his mother would not listen. "'You've never been to the country," she said. "How do you know you're not going to like it?" But Jeremy was sure that there was nothing in the country that he would like more than the city.

The next day, they packed up the car and drove off to the country. Jeremy sat in the back seat with his arms crossed and sulked the whole way. They passed lots of trees and farms, and more trees and more farms, and the occasional house along the road.

One farm that they passed had a bunch of cows standing in a field. Jeremy's mom said, "'Hey look! Cows! You've never seen cows before, have you?" But Jeremy just continued to sulk. "'Big deal," he said. "'You can see cows anytime on milk cartons."

Jeremy and the Wishing Stars Continued

Another farm had horses, and his mom said, "Hey look, Jeremy! Horses! You've never seen those before either!" But Jeremy continued to sulk. "So what," he said. "You can see horses anytime on TV."

Finally, they arrived at their campsite and unpacked their things. Jeremy tried to set up his tent but it just turned into a big mess. The sheet got all tangled, the poles wouldn't fit, and Jeremy got frustrated and sulked even more.

Then, they went for a walk in the woods and Jeremy got bitten by every mosquito. The bites left itchy red bumps all over his body, which his mother told him not to scratch. And Jeremy got frustrated and sulked even more.

Then, it started to rain and their clothing got soaked. They ran back to camp and put on dry things. But Jeremy still felt damp and uncomfortable. He was now very frustrated and sulked even more!

For dinner, they just had cooked hot dogs on sticks and baked potatoes wrapped in tin foil. Jeremy's mom said, "'It's fun to cook on an open fire!'" But Jeremy didn't think that it was fun at all.

He was cold, and he was itchy and very, very frustrated! Jeremy stood up and yelled at his mom, "'I hate the country! I just want to go home!'" Then he turned away from the campfire and stomped back toward his tent.

But away from the campfire, it was very dark, and Jeremy couldn't see where he was going. His foot slipped on a patch of fresh mud and Jeremy fell straight backwards onto the cold, wet ground.

Jeremy and the Wishing Stars Continued

This should have made Jeremy even more frustrated – and it would have – except that at that very moment, when Jeremy opened his eyes, something amazing happened.

For the first time, when Jeremy looked up at the night sky, he could see stars, as far as the eye could see. And not just a few stars either. Hundreds of stars! Thousands of stars! Millions of stars! Zillions of stars! More stars than you could possibly imagine. "All of the lights in all the cities of the world would not be enough to fill a sky so big," thought Jeremy. "It would take you a hundred lifetimes to wish on all of those stars!"

Then, Jeremy closed his eyes and concentrated with all his might on a very important wish. He looked up at the stars, twinkling above, and said, "Starlight, star bright, first star I see tonight, I wish I may, I wish I might, have this wish, I wish tonight..."

Afterwards, he continued to lie there, gazing up at the sky for several minutes. Finally, his mother called him from the campfire saying, "Jeremy, are you alright?"

"I'm fine," said Jeremy with a smile on his face. Maybe the country wasn't so bad after all.

A few days later, Jeremy's family packed up their bags and drove back to the city.

Jeremy and the Wishing Stars Continued

That night, Jeremy looked out of his twenty-third floor window, as usual. But, instead of looking down at the lights of the city below, he looked up at the patch of night sky above him. A big grin appeared on Jeremy's face when he saw that his wish had actually come true.

For there, in that small patch of sky, he could see a single star twinkling away. And when Jeremy saw it, he remembered that somewhere, way up high, above the tall buildings around him, there was a giant sky full of twinkling stars. And they were shining brighter than the lights of any city."

1. Summarizing: What made Jeremy change his mind about camping near the end of the story?

- ☐ He enjoyed taking photographs of nature on his hike.
- ☐ He enjoyed lighting a campfire.
- ☐ He got to see stars for the first time.
- ☐ He enjoyed the fresh air and quiet nights.

2. Summarizing: Why was it so hard for Jeremy to see any stars at night in the city?

- ☐ The city was too bright to see the stars.
- ☐ Jeremy couldn't stay awake long enough to see them.
- ☐ Jeremy's view of the sky was blocked by buildings and trees.
- ☐ Both A and B.

3. Summarizing: Which event did NOT happen when Jeremy went camping?

- ☐ He saw cows and horses on the drive to the campsite.
- ☐ He went on a walk in the woods.
- ☐ He swam in a lake.
- ☐ He cooked over an open fire.

Summarize what you think the main idea or theme is with supporting reasons:

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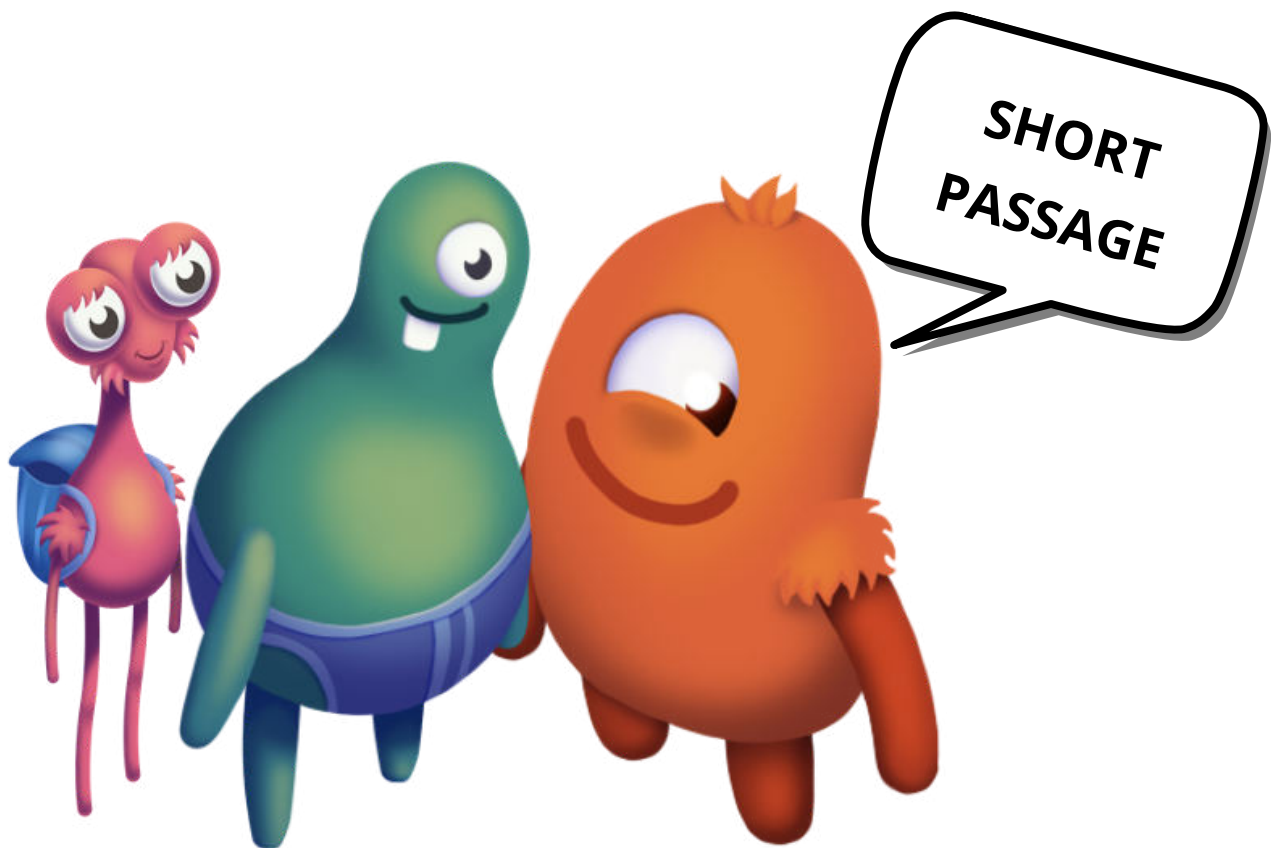
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ANSWER VARIES

7TH GRADE

Included in the following pages are 7th-grade skill leveled short reading passages as seen in the game Dreamscape.

Answer keys are provided directly after.



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

""""Get to your places!"""" shouted the Queen in a voice of thunder, and people began running about in all directions, tumbling up against each other. However, they got settled down in a minute or two, and the game began.

Alice thought she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life; it was all ridges and furrows. The croquet balls were live hedgehogs, and the mallets live flamingos and the soldiers had to double themselves up and stand on their hands and feet, to make the arches.

The players all played at once, without waiting for turns, quarrelling all the while and fighting for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time, the Queen was in a furious passion and went stamping about and shouting, ""Off with his head!"" or ""Off with her head!"" about once in a minute.

""They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here,"" thought Alice; ""the great wonder is that there's anyone left alive!""

1. Metaphor: Which figurative language technique is being used in the phrase "a voice of thunder"?

- ☐ Hyperbole
- ☐ Metonym
- ☐ Metaphor
- ☐ Synecdoche

2. Metaphor: What does it mean that the Queen shouted "in a voice of thunder"? Select all that apply.

- ☐ She spoke from above.
- ☐ She spoke about a storm.
- ☐ She spoke loudly.
- ☐ She spoke angrily.

3. Point of View: Although not told in 1st person, this story is from _____'s perspective.

- ☐ The Queen
- ☐ Alice
- ☐ The soldiers
- ☐ The hedgehog

4. Point of View: How does the reader know that this story is being told from Alice's point of view? Select all that apply.

- ☐ How does the reader know that this story is being told from Alice's point of view? Select all that apply.
- ☐ The story is written in a 1st person account from Alice.
- ☐ The reader does not see anything happening that Alice cannot see.
- ☐ The story only describes what Alice is saying or doing.

4. Use the following vocabulary words in a complete sentence:

- furious
- quarrel
- passion

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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ANSWER VARIES

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

The Worm Ouroboros

In such ways Mivarsh fell asleep, clasping the egg as a man should clasp his dearest. And a little before dawn it hatched in his arms and fell asunder, and he started awake, his arms about the neck of a strange steed. It went forth into the pale light before the sunrise, and he with it, holding it fast. The sheen of its hair was like the peacock's neck; its eyes like the changing fires of a star of a windy night. Its nostrils widened to the breath of the dawn. Its wings unfolded and grew stiff, their feathers like the tail-feathers of the peacock pheasant, white with purple eyes, and hard to the touch as iron blades. Mivarsh was mounted on its back, seizing the shining mane with both hands, trembling. And now was he fain to descend, but the hippogriff snorted and reared, and he, fearing a great fall, clung closer. It stamped with its silver hoofs, flapping its wings, ramping like a lioness, tearing up the grass with its claws.

1. Vocabulary: Based on the context of the story, what is the meaning of the word "asunder"?

- ☐ cohesive
- ☐ apart, divided
- ☐ downward
- ☐ fixed, whole

2. Vocabulary: The word "ramping" can be defined as rearing up on its hind legs in a threatening posture.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

3. What inferences can you make from this short passage?

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The Rider

Isar gripped the thick neck of the gigantic black horse and bent low, burying his face in its wildy whipping mane. They raced faster and faster towards the glowing dome and in the instant just before impact, Isar clenched his teeth and shut his eyes. But the impact never came.

1. Parts of Speech: Which of the following are adjectives in this passage? Check all that apply.

- ☐ glowing
- ☐ gigantic
- ☐ clenched
- ☐ faster

2. Vocabulary: In the context of the story, what is the meaning of "impact"?

- ☐ a strong effect on someone of something
- ☐ forcible contact with another object
- ☐ to press lightly against
- ☐ an agreement or contract

3. Write what you think happened before Isar began riding the horse:

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Isar gripped the thick neck of the gigantic black horse and bent low, burying his face in its wildy whipping mane. They raced faster and faster towards the glowing dome and in the instant just before impact, Isar clenched his teeth and shut his eyes. But the impact never came.

1. Parts of Speech: Which of the following are adjectives in this passage? Check all that apply.

- ☒ glowing
- ☒ gigantic
- ☐ clenched
- ☐ faster

2. Vocabulary: In the context of the story, what is the meaning of "impact"?

- ☐ a strong effect on someone or something
- ☒ forcible contact with another object
- ☐ to press lightly against
- ☐ an agreement or contract

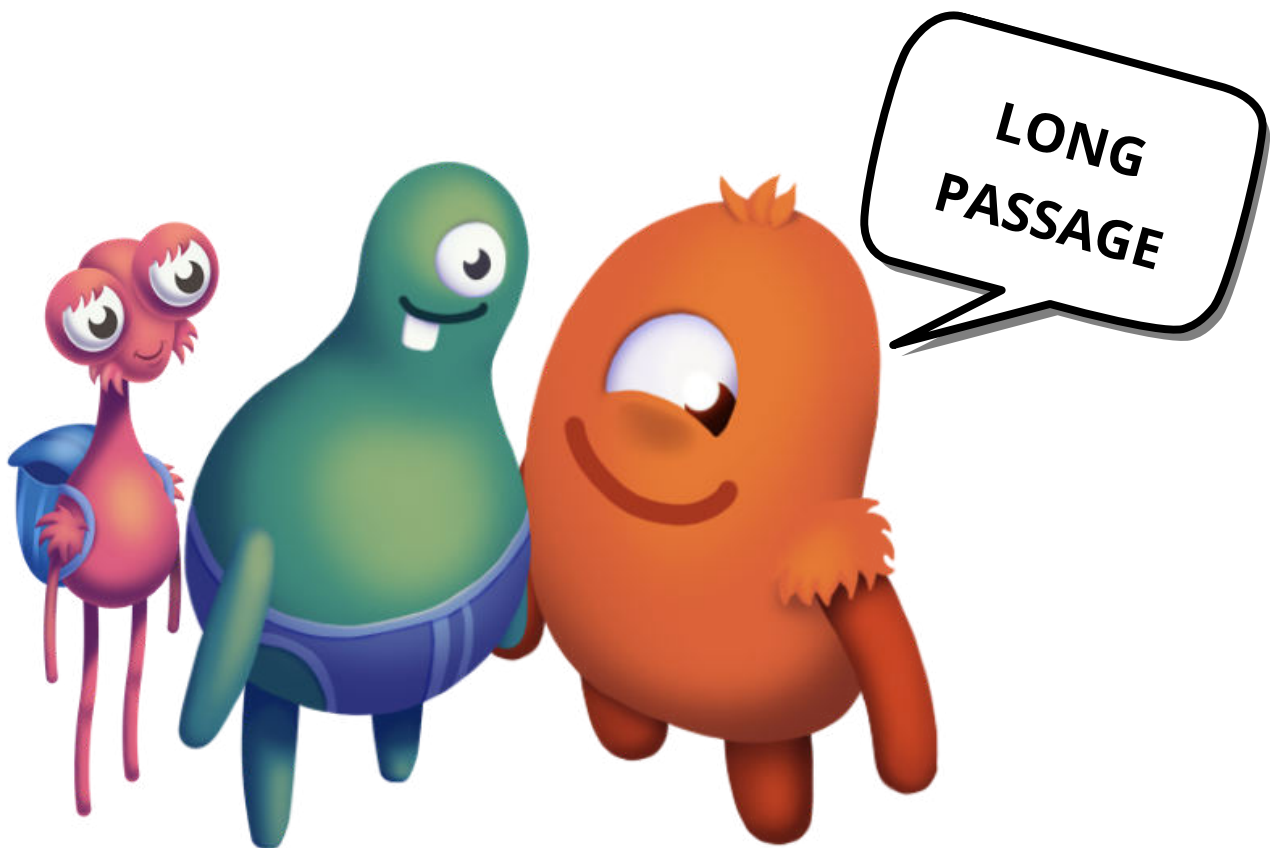
3. Write what you think happened before Isar began riding the horse:

ANSWER VARIES

7TH GRADE

Included in the following pages are 7th-grade skill leveled long reading passages as seen in the game Dreamscape.

Answer keys are provided directly after.



Cool Girls

"Dina saw a group of girls that seemed to be about her age sitting on top of a picnic table at the other end of the park. They were all turned away from her, apparently looking at something of great interest in the distance that she couldn't make out. One sat cross-legged leaning back on her hands, her shiny hair cascading down her back. Another rested her elbows on top of her bent knees, gently picking at her nail polish. They lounged gracefully in their effortless jeans. Cool girls.

Dina took a deep breath and squared her shoulders. She was feeling like a new woman recently– why not be a cool girl? As she walked towards them with an increasingly moisture-less mouth, she tried to decide if it was better if they noticed her approaching, or if she just appeared out of nowhere beside them. Suddenly both options seemed unavoidably and horrifyingly awkward. Luckily it didn't seem to matter because not one of the girls turned their head so much as a fraction of an inch as Dina drew nearer. They were definitely focused on something, it seemed, but it wasn't her.

After what seemed like at least an hour (but must have been only a couple of minutes), Dina finally arrived at the picnic table. She had snapped some particularly crunchy twigs underfoot in her last few steps, but still nobody looked around.

Feeling more and more panicked and insane for having put herself in this bizarre position with a bunch of strangers, Dina finally found her (suddenly very tremulous) voice. ""Hi hello I'm Dina where– what are you all looking at?"

Nothing.

Cool Girls Continued

""Uh, I hang out here a lot but I've never noticed you here before, do you, uh, go to parks a lot? I mean, this one? 'Cause like, um, like I said I haven't seen you here and I'm here like pretty much all the time, or like, a normal amount of time."

Still nothing.

Dina stared into the intricate twin braids lining the back of one of the girls' heads. She was getting really frustrated now and could feel the nervous anticipation turning to anger in her throat. Why did these girls think they were so much better than her anyway? As if she didn't deserve even a single moment of their precious attention? Where exactly did they get off with that– they didn't even know her!

Dina stormed around the picnic table to look at them– no, to force them to look at her just for one minute, and to listen. But when she came around to the other side of the table she stopped dead. Her mouth hung open and had gone bone dry once more.

Standing on that side of the table, she stared in horror at that same pair of intricate twin braids. The girls hadn't moved– Dina hadn't taken her furious gaze off of them– yet somehow she was looking at the back of their heads again. But their bodies were still turned towards her! It was all so grotesque and somehow she could still read the phrase on the front of one of their t-shirts: Say it again and I'll pretend like I care."

1. Synonyms: The narrative point of view of this story is 3rd-Person Limited. How does this point of view affect the reader's understanding of the story?

- ☐ Since the audience only knows the "cool girls" thoughts and feelings, the audience can easily sympathize with Dina.
- ☐ Since the audience only knows the "cool girls'" thoughts and feelings, the audience knows why the girls are acting strangely.
- ☐ Since the audience only knows Dina's thoughts and feelings, the audience feels the same confusion that Dina does.
- ☐ Since the audience only knows Dina's thoughts and feelings, the audience has a difficult time visualizing the setting.

2. Repetition: "Read the following quote from the story: "Uh, I hang out here a lot but I've never noticed you here before, do you, uh, go to parks a lot? I mean, this one? 'Cause like, um, like I said I haven't seen you here and I'm here like pretty much all the time, or like, a normal amount of time." Dina's repetition of the word ""like"" reveals that she is:"

- ☐ headstrong
- ☐ poetic
- ☐ nervous
- ☐ outraged

3. Setting: Which of the following is NOT a way the setting affects the plot development?

- ☐ Dina is a regular at the park, so she notices the "cool girls" right away.
- ☐ Since it's daytime at the park, the "cool girls" don't seem strange at first.
- ☐ The setting of a park makes Dina weary of the "cool girls".
- ☐ The setting of a park makes it easy for Dina to approach the "cool girls".

Write a short prediction of what you think is going to happen next:

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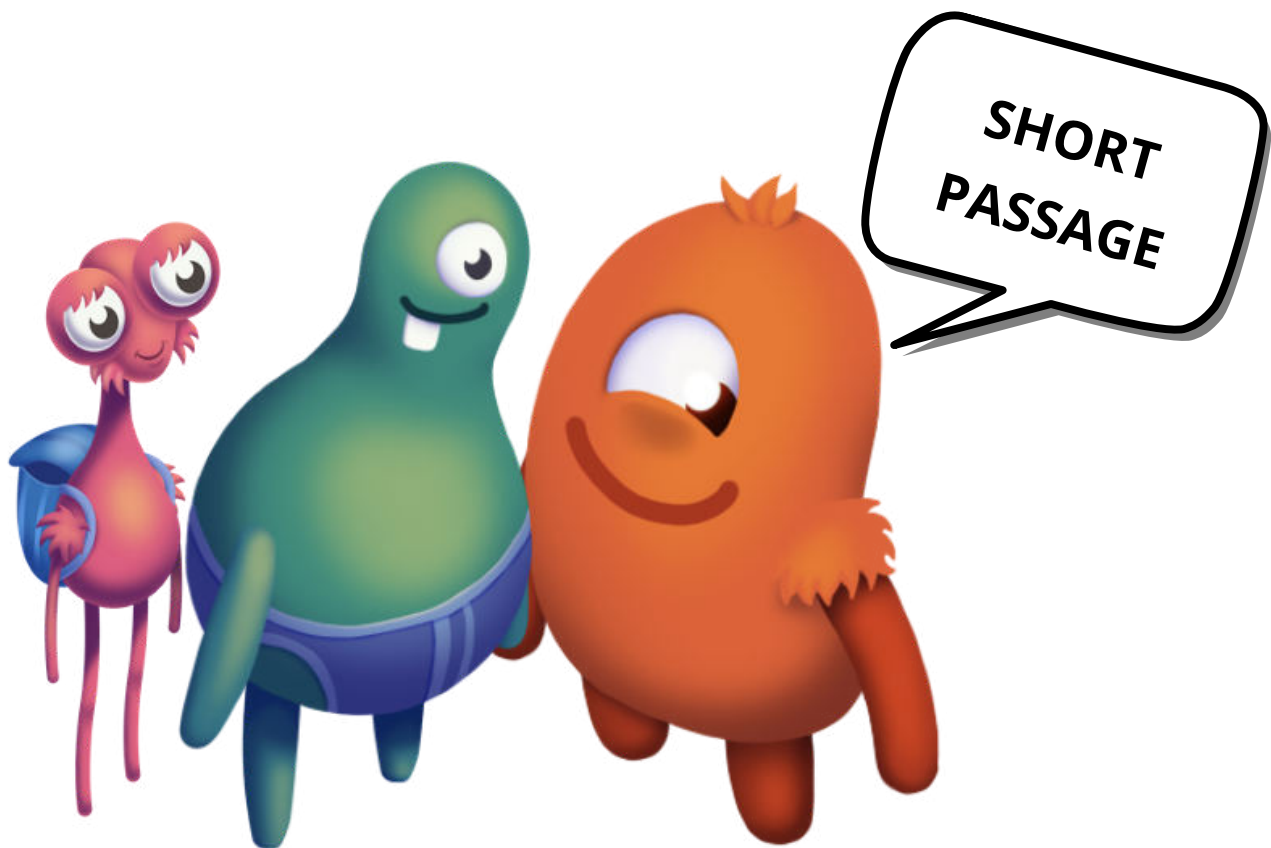
Write a short prediction of what you think is going to happen next:

ANSWER VARIES

8TH GRADE

Included in the following pages are 8th-grade skill leveled short reading passages as seen in the game Dreamscape.

Answer keys are provided directly after.



A Study In Scarlet

""You amaze me, Holmes," said I. ""Surely you are not as sure as you pretend to be of all those particulars which you gave."

""There's no room for a mistake," he answered. ""The very first thing which I observed on arriving there was that a cab had made two ruts with its wheels close to the curb. Now, up to last night, we have had no rain for a week, so that those wheels which left such a deep impression must have been there during the night. There were the marks of the horse's hoofs, too, the outline of one of which was far more clearly cut than that of the other three, showing that that was a new shoe. Since the cab was there after the rain began, and was not there at any time during the morning—I have Gregson's word for that—it follows that it must have been there during the night, and, therefore, that it brought those two individuals to the house.""

1. Character Traits: Which word best describes the narrator's feelings in this passage?

- ☐ Proud
- ☐ Gloating
- ☐ Doubtful
- ☐ Generous

2. Visualizing: What does the rain have to do with the ruts left by the cab's wheels?

- ☐ The rain washed away all the other ruts and markings that had been left on the road from earlier that day.
- ☐ The rain caused the dirt road to become muddy. If the road had been dirt instead of mud, the wheels would not have made deep ruts.
- ☐ The rain flooded the road so that the only way to travel across it would have been in a cab.
- ☐ The cab's wheels made the deep ruts in the mud which were filled in by the rain, preserving them for Holmes to discover later.

3. Inferring: What most likely happened right before this passage?

- ☐ Holmes expressed his uncertainty about the mystery of how and when the two people arrived at the house.
- ☐ The narrator expressed his uncertainty about the possibility of solving this mystery.
- ☐ Holmes and the narrator witnessed the two people arriving at the house.
- ☐ Holmes gave an incredibly specific theory or prediction about how and when the two people arrived at the house.

4. Identifying Dialect: What do the word choices and manner of speaking tell the reader about these two characters? Select all that apply.

- ☐ That they are using a formal tone.
- ☐ That they are likely not speaking their first language.
- ☐ That they are using a casual tone.
- ☐ That they are likely highly educated.

5. Write a paragraph long prediction on what you think will happen next along with any other inferences you may have:

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A Little Thievery

Detective Chalmers smiled at the wicked thief's bewildered expression. "I knew as soon as it became clear that the indents on the floor had been made by a stool. We had been looking for an exceedingly tall suspect, when we should have been looking right under our noses."

1. Inferring: Which clues in the text suggest that the "wicked thief" is very short? Select all that apply.

- ☐ The title includes the word "Little."
- ☐ The title includes the word "Thievery."
- ☐ The thief is described as having a "bewildered expression."
- ☐ Detective Chalmers implies that the thief stood on a stool during the robbery.
- ☐ Detective Chalmers says, "We had been looking for an exceedingly tall suspect..."
- ☐ Detective Chalmers says, "we should have been looking right under our noses."

2. Synonyms: Which of the following words is the best synonym for "exceedingly"?

- ☐ Terrifyingly
- ☐ Extremely
- ☐ Mysteriously
- ☐ Slightly

3. Write a complete sentence using the word "bewildered" or "exceedingly":

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ANSWER VARIES

The Sign of the Four

It was a wild and desolate place, where the moon glimmered upon a wide expanse of marsh-land, with pools of stagnant water and beds of decaying vegetation. The launch with a dull thud ran up upon the mud-bank, with her bow in the air and her stern flush with the water. The fugitive sprang out, but his stump instantly sank its whole length into the sodden soil. In vain he struggled and writhed. Not one step could he possibly take either forwards or backwards. He yelled in impotent rage, and kicked frantically into the mud with his other foot, but his struggles only bored his wooden pin the deeper into the sticky bank. When we brought our launch alongside he was so firmly anchored that it was only by throwing the end of a rope over his shoulders that we were able to haul him out, and to drag him, like some evil fish, over our side.

1. Inferring: Based on its use in the passage, what does the word "launch" mean in this context?

- ☐ To project or send
- ☐ A tank or armored vehicle
- ☐ A horse
- ☐ A boat
- ☐ A group

2. Predicting: What is most likely going to happen next?

- ☐ The people who caught the man will help him.
- ☐ The man will capture the people on the other boat and imprison them.
- ☐ The man will escape and run off into the woods.
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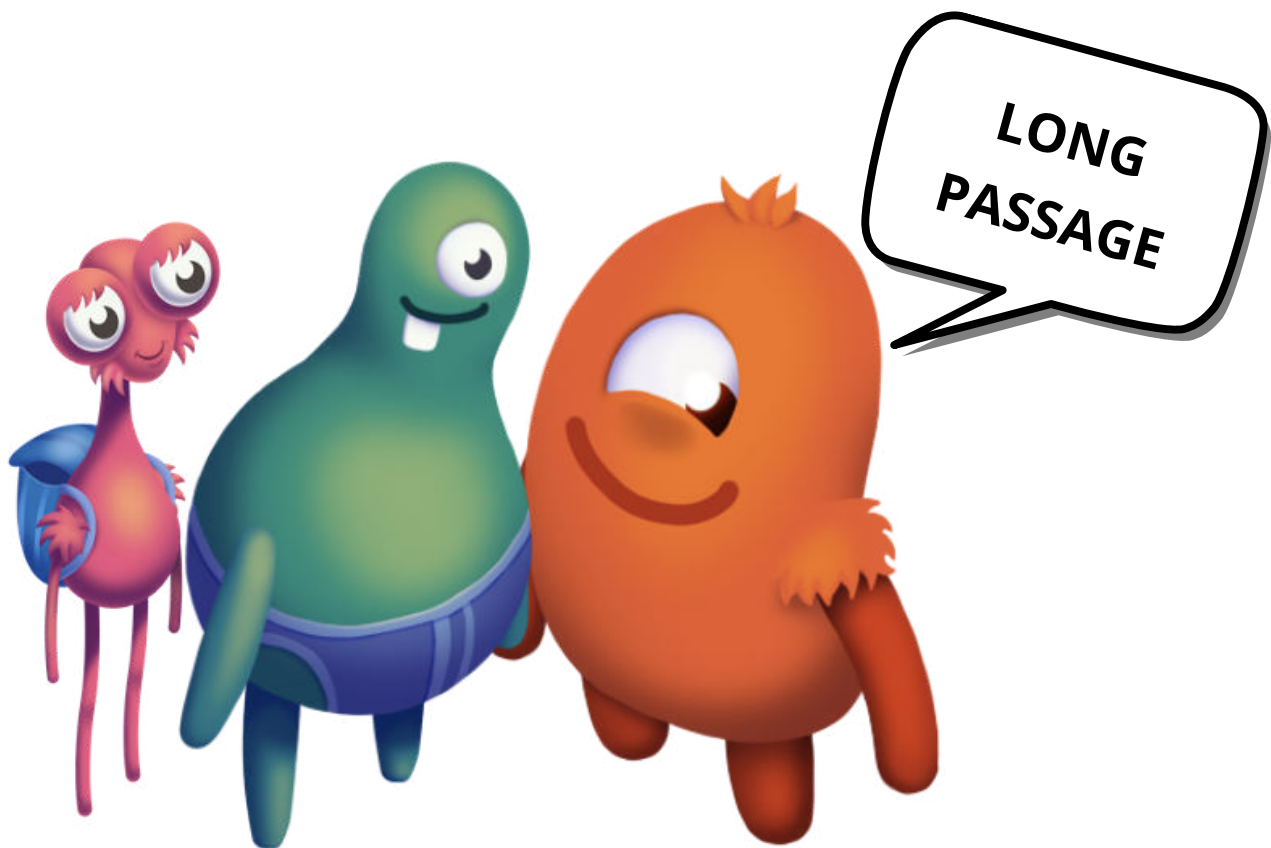
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8TH GRADE

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Answer keys are provided directly after.



A Fourth Form Friendship

"It was finished at last, even to the pedestal, and Aldred stepped back and looked at it with mixed feelings. She had done her very best; she dared not add another impress, from fear of spoiling it, yet she knew how far it fell short of her ideal.

""I wonder if Phidias used to be contented with what he'd done?"" she thought. ""I suppose he was the greatest sculptor that ever lived. I remember reading that Millais once went to an exhibition of his own pictures, and came away very dejected. Shall I ask them all to come and see it now? I want so much to show it, but somehow I hardly dare. I almost think I'll leave it for somebody to find out, and just go back to the rink and say nothing.""

She had not counted, however, on Mabel, who, missing her friend for an unusual length of time, took off her skates and went to hunt for her, tracking her in the end by her footsteps in the snow. Mabel's amazement when she reached the lawn was only equalled by her admiration. She rushed off instantly to fetch all the girls to look, even venturing to knock at the study door and report her news at head-quarters.

Aldred's snow statue made quite a sensation at the Grange. Miss Drummond thought so highly of it that she had it photographed, and invited many of her friends from Chetbourne to come and see it. It was such a daring and original project for a girl of only fifteen to have carried out entirely alone that she felt it reflected credit on the school to possess so clever a pupil. Aldred was praised to her heart's content, and received so much attention from teachers and visitors that she could certainly consider herself, for the time being, the most important person at Birkwood. She was petted by the prefects, invited to skate by members of the Sixth Form who had ignored her existence before, and asked so often for her autograph that she grew almost tired of signing her name."

1. Comparison: Which traits of Phidias and Millais does Aldred see in herself? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Being the best artists of all time
- ☐ Being unsatisfied with the quality of their work
- ☐ Being artists
- ☐ Wanting praise for their work

2. Allusion: Why are Phidias and Millais mentioned in this passage?

- ☐ Because they are characters in the story
- ☐ Because Aldred makes an allusion to them
- ☐ Because Aldred makes a reference to them
- ☐ Because they are characters Aldred has made up

3. Close Reading: Which word in this sentence most clearly suggests that Aldred enjoyed the praise and attention she was getting: "She was petted by the prefects, invited to skate by members of the Sixth Form who had ignored her existence before, and asked so often for her autograph that she grew almost tired of signing her name."?

- ☐ Petted
- ☐ Invited
- ☐ Ignored
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Autograph
- ☐ Almost

4. What inferences can you make throughout this passage:

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