

MT. PISGAH MIDDLE SCHOOL  
6<sup>TH</sup> Grade  
ENGLISH Language Arts  
SUMMER ENRICHMENT Packet

# Elijah McCoy

*by Fred M. B. Amram*

①

Elijah McCoy was a true genius, the inventor of 50 patented ideas. Most of all, McCoy's name stood for quality. Even now when people want top quality, they say "I want the real McCoy."

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McCoy lived at a time when railroads were changing the nation. Tracks were laid from east to west and from north to south. The North American West was built by the railroads, which made transporting people and goods possible.

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McCoy was born in Canada, into a community of escaped slaves. As a young man, he went to Scotland to apprentice as a mechanical engineer. When he returned to North America, he ended up in Michigan, at the home of the Michigan Central Railroad.

## **Puts Skills to Use**

Although he was trained as an engineer, the best job he could get was as a stoker, the worker who kept the fire burning on steam-powered locomotives. McCoy soon put his engineering skills to use to resolve a common problem faced by the railroad.

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Locomotive engines have many moving parts that rub against each other. If you rub your hands together quickly and for a long time they will become hot. In the same way, a steam engine's parts overheat when they rubbed together too long. The heat could cause damage to the engine parts and could even start fires. The only way to prevent overheating was to frequently oil, or lubricate, the engine's parts.

As a stoker for the Michigan Central Railroad, part of McCoy's job was to lubricate the engine by hand. The train had to be stopped each time he oiled the engine's parts. The stops caused great delays in the train's schedules, and even with careful oiling, engine parts overheated often. Then the parts had to be repaired or replaced, causing even greater delays.

McCoy knew there had to be a better way to lubricate the engines. He applied his engineering training to this important problem.

### **Invents Lubricator**

First, in 1872, McCoy invented a lubricator that did not require a worker to do the job by hand. The train had to stand still while the lubricator was in use, but this method was safer and worked better and faster than the old method. The railroad was pleased with McCoy's work and encouraged him to improve his invention. Ten years later, McCoy patented a lubricator that worked while a train or ship was moving. The lubricator automatically dripped oil on moving parts as needed.

### **The Real McCoy**

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McCoy invented many versions of the lubricator. Some were used with engines in motion. Others were used with engines standing still in factories. The automatic lubricator was so popular that other engineers started to design their own versions. However, none were as good. When customers bought a lubricator they asked, "Is this the real McCoy?"

McCoy did not stay with the railroad. He became a teacher, instructing others about the use of his lubricator and about other workings of engines. And he never stopped inventing.

# **Elijah McCoy**

***by Fred M. B. Amram***

- 1 Based on paragraphs 1 and 9, why do people still use the saying, "I want the real McCoy"?
  - A to remember the inventor that created so many wonderful inventions
  - B to demonstrate that high-quality products are still important to the consumer
  - C to express how the railroad is important to today's society and the world
  - D to determine whether the product was invented by Elijah McCoy
  
- 2 What can be inferred from the information in paragraph 2?
  - A Railroads were seen as a dangerous way to travel.
  - B Railroads were vital to the development of America.
  - C Railroads were a huge source of trouble for engineers.
  - D Railroads were a fun, new way to travel across America.

- 3 What does the author mean when he says that the North American West “was built by the railroads” in paragraph 2?
- A There is a town called North American West that was built by a railroad company.
  - B Railroad companies resisted building railroads in certain places in the country.
  - C Population growth in the North American West was possible because railroad travel was possible.
  - D The most famous railroad company in the region was called North American West.
- 4 What does *apprentice* mean, as used in paragraph 3?
- A learn from more-experienced teachers
  - B create new and important inventions
  - C teach less-experienced learners
  - D design parts for trains and cars
- 5 How does paragraph 5 contribute to the idea that McCoy saw a need for improvement in lubricating engine parts?
- A It emphasizes the amount of work McCoy did.
  - B It details how McCoy created a new invention.
  - C It explains why McCoy wanted to work for the railroad.
  - D It describes the problem that McCoy recognized.

- 6 What inference can be made about Elijah McCoy's second lubricator as compared to the first?
- A It was safer for companies to use.
  - B It took less time to produce.
  - C It cost less money to produce.
  - D It allowed the train to keep moving.
- 7 What does the phrase "the real McCoy" mean, based on paragraph 9?
- A the best-quality item
  - B the family business
  - C the first train engineers
  - D the engine lubrication
- 8 Which quote supports the idea that Elijah McCoy liked to share his talents with others?
- A "When he returned to North America, he ended up in Michigan, at the home of the Michigan Central Railroad."
  - B "Although he was trained as an engineer, the best job he could get was as a stoker, the worker who kept the fire burning on steam-powered locomotives."
  - C "The railroad was pleased with McCoy's work and encouraged him to improve his invention."
  - D "He became a teacher, instructing others about the use of his lubricator and about other workings of engines."

# The Top 10 Reasons Students Cannot Cite or Rely On Wikipedia

*by Mark E. Moran*

①

Wikipedia provides Internet users with millions of articles on a broad range of topics and commonly ranks first in search engines. But its reliability and credibility fall well short of the standards for a school paper. According to Wikipedia itself, "[W]hile some articles are of the highest quality of scholarship, others are admittedly complete rubbish. . . . use [Wikipedia] with an informed understanding of what it is and what it isn't."

To help you develop such an understanding, we present 10 reasons you can't rely on information in Wikipedia.

**10. You must never fully rely on *any* one source for important information.**

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Everyone makes mistakes. All scholarly journals and newspapers contain "corrections" sections in which they acknowledge errors in their prior work. And even the most neutral writer is sometimes guilty of not being fully objective. Thus, you must take a skeptical approach to everything you read.

The focus of your search should be on finding accurate information and forming a full picture of an issue, rather than believing the first thing you read. This is particularly true on the Internet, where anyone can publish, cheaply and quickly. Always verify important information by confirming it with multiple sources.

**9. You especially can't rely on something when you don't even know who wrote it.**



Very few Wikipedia editors and contributors use their real name or provide any information about who they are. In order to properly evaluate information on the Internet, there are three questions you must always ask; the first two are "Who wrote this?" and "Why did they write it?" On sites with anonymous authors like Wikipedia, you can't find this information.

### **8. The contributor with an agenda often prevails.**

In theory, the intellectual sparring at the heart of Wikipedia's group editing process results in a consensus that removes unreliable contributions and edits. But often the contributor who "wins" is not the one with the soundest information, but rather the one with the strongest agenda.

In March 2009, Irish student Shane Fitzgerald, who was conducting research on the Internet and globalization of information, posted a fake quotation on the Wikipedia article about recently deceased French composer Maurice Jarre. Due to the fact that the quote was not attributed to a reliable source, it was removed several times by editors, but Fitzgerald continued reposting it until it was allowed to remain.

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Fitzgerald was startled to learn that several major newspapers picked up the quote and published it in obituaries, confirming his suspicions of the questionable ways in which journalists use Web sites, and Wikipedia, as a reliable source. Fitzgerald e-mailed the newspapers, letting them know that the quote was fabricated; he believes that otherwise, they might never have found out.

### **7. Individuals with agendas sometimes have significant editing authority.**

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Administrators on Wikipedia have the power to delete or disallow comments or articles they disagree with and support the viewpoints they approve. For example, beginning in 2003, UK scientist William Connolley became a Web site administrator and subsequently wrote or rewrote more than 5,000 Wikipedia articles supporting the concept of climate change and global warming. More importantly, he used his authority to ban more than 2,000 contributors with opposing viewpoints from making further contributions.



According to *The Financial Post*, when Connolley was through editing, "The Medieval Warm Period disappeared, as did criticism of the global warming orthodoxy." Connolley has since been stripped of authority at Wikipedia, but one blogger believes he continues to post.

Furthermore, in 2007, a new program called WikiScanner uncovered individuals with a clear conflict of interest that had written or edited some Wikipedia entries. Employees from organizations such as the CIA, the Democratic National Party, and Diebold were editing Wikipedia entries in their employers' favor.

#### **6. Sometimes "vandals" create malicious entries that go uncorrected for months.**

Due to the fact that Wikipedia can be edited by anyone with an Internet connection, users can falsify entries. Though in many instances reviewers quickly delete this "vandalism," occasionally false information can remain on Wikipedia for extended periods of time.

For example, John Seigenthaler, a former assistant to Robert Kennedy, was falsely implicated in the assassinations of the Kennedy brothers on his Wikipedia biography for a period of more than 100 days without his knowledge.

#### **5. There is little diversity among editors.**

According to a 2009 survey by the Wikimedia Foundation, 87 percent of Wikipedia editors are male, with an average age of 26.8 years. According to executive director Sue Gardner, they hail mostly from Europe and North America, and many of them are in graduate school.

Although most of these editors are undoubtedly intelligent and passionate about enhancing the accuracy of Wikipedia, the site falls far short of its ideals of providing "the sum of all human knowledge" without the broad perspectives that a more diversified pool of editors would bring.

#### **4. The number of active Wikipedia editors has flatlined.**

The number of active Wikipedia editors (those who make at least five edits a month) has stopped growing. It remains to be seen whether the current number of active editors can maintain and continue updating Wikipedia.

### **3. It has become harder for casual participants to contribute.**

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According to the Palo Alto Research Center, the contributions of casual and new contributors are being reversed at a much greater rate than several years ago. The result is that a steady group of high-level editors has more control over Wikipedia than ever.

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A group of editors known as “deletionists” are said to “edit first and ask questions later,” making it harder for new contributors to participate, and making it harder for Wikipedia—which, again, aspires to provide “the sum of all human knowledge”—to overcome the issue that it is controlled by a stagnant pool of editors from a limited demographic.

### **2. Accurate contributors can be silenced.**

Deletionists on Wikipedia often rely on the argument that a contribution comes from an “unreliable source,” with the editor deciding what is reliable. An incident last year showed the degree to which editors at the very top of Wikipedia were willing to rely on this crutch when it suits their purpose.

When the Taliban kidnapped *New York Times* reporter David Rohde in Afghanistan, the paper convinced 40 media organizations plus Wikipedia not to report on it out of concerns that it would compromise Rohde’s safety. Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales told the *Times*, once Rohde was free, that “We were really helped by the fact that it (postings on Rohde) hadn’t appeared in a place we would regard as a reliable source.” Thus, Wales and other senior Wikipedia editors showed they were willing to rely on the “unreliable source” canard to delete information they had been told by a very reliable source was true, even when a more noble reason—Rohde’s safety—would have justified it.

And finally, the number one reason you can’t cite or rely on Wikipedia:

## **1. It says so on Wikipedia.**

Wikipedia says, "We do not expect you to trust us." It adds that it is "not a primary source" and that "because some articles may contain errors," you should "not use Wikipedia to make critical decisions."

Furthermore, as Wikipedia notes in its "About" section, "Users should be aware that not all articles are of encyclopedic quality from the start: they may contain false or debatable information."

### **Reference: Using Wikipedia**

Wikipedia can actually be a constructive tool in the classroom if understood and used correctly. To learn more, read *FindingDulcinea's Web Guide to Wikipedia in the Classroom*.

North Carolina State University Libraries has a short video that explains what Wikipedia is and how information is entered into it. Take a tour of the "article," "discussion," "edit this page," and "history" tabs to go "beneath the surface" of Wikipedia.

Stephen Colbert\* takes a satirical view of Wikipedia in a segment on his show and on his own user-generated encyclopedia, Wikiality. Though intended for laughs, it captures, in an entertaining fashion, why Wikipedia can't be relied upon as a sole source of information.

**\*Stephen Colbert:** comedian and television show host

# **The Top 10 Reasons Students Cannot Cite or Rely On Wikipedia**

***by Mark E. Moran***

- 9 What is the central idea the author is conveying in the text?
- A Wikipedia is gradually improving in accuracy and quality of information.
  - B Wikipedia has so many flaws that other sources must be relied upon for useful research.
  - C Allowing students to reference Wikipedia is a sensible research practice.
  - D Allowing anyone to serve as a contributor has made Wikipedia into an effective resource.
- 10 What was the author trying to convey by quoting Wikipedia's own statement that some of its content was "complete rubbish" in paragraph 1?
- A The Web site is full of trash.
  - B The Web site contains computer viruses and is unsafe.
  - C Some content on the Web site is fun to read because it reports gossip.
  - D Some content on the Web site is not accurate information.
- 11 What does the word *skeptical* mean in paragraph 3?
- A determined
  - B questioning
  - C educated
  - D praising



## GRADE 6 READING—RELEASED ITEMS



- 12 Why is it important to confirm information through multiple resources?
- A Information drawn from multiple resources usually produces a more accurate result.
  - B When multiple resources are used, researchers know who wrote the articles.
  - C Experts on specific subjects usually write more than one article on a topic.
  - D Information that is found in multiple resources is more carefully edited.
- 13 What does the word *fabricated* mean in paragraph 8?
- A created from materials or fabrics
  - B made up as a way to trick people
  - C putting parts together to combine things
  - D using other people's ideas as one's own
- 14 How does paragraph 9 explain one of the major problems with Wikipedia's articles?
- A Administrators can control postings and only present articles that agree with their personal points of view.
  - B Administrators have the ability to edit articles and change what authors have written.
  - C An administrator did not believe in global warming and removed all of the articles that support the theory.
  - D An administrator blocked all articles on global warming because it is a narrow point of view.



## GRADE 6 READING—RELEASED ITEMS



- 15 According to paragraphs 17 and 18, what are *deletionists*?
- A editors who participate in writing articles with contributors
  - B editors who interview and proofread information given by contributors
  - C editors who change or remove information given by contributors
  - D editors who assist contributors in verifying their claims
- 16 Why does Wikipedia state that their articles are not “primary sources”?
- A Wikipedia is not an authorized world encyclopedia.
  - B Wikipedia cannot verify the reliability of articles that are written for the site.
  - C Wikipedia does not want students to copy articles for their term papers.
  - D Wikipedia editors are not efficient deletionists.

# **Concrete Source: MIT Scientists Turn the Concrete Jungle Green**

***by Ian Hardy***

*The word "concrete" is not much fun to say out loud. It actually sounds like a cold, hard, grey word. . . .*

Let's face it—concrete is boring. Most of us recognize it instantly, when we see hideous flats\* and offices from the 1960s and 1970s, that for a brief moment were the cutting edge of architecture.

So, with our expectations completely lowered, it's time to visit the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, known better as MIT.

## **Concrete age**

Here concrete is treated with an admiration more often reserved for diamonds or gold, especially by Franz-Josef Ulm, one of the top professors in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

"Concrete is maybe one of the oldest man-made materials on earth," he says.

"Some people say it was used by the Egyptians for the second layer of the pyramids. Modern cement came about in the late nineteenth, early twentieth century."

When you meet the researchers, their passion for concrete becomes infectious. It has, after all, had an immeasurable impact on mankind.

It has allowed us to cross rivers easily, live on top of one another in relative comfort and drive vehicles for hundreds of miles without becoming stuck in the mud.

Hamlin Jennings, the executive director of MIT's Concrete Sustainability Hub, a collection of academics from various departments brought together to examine concrete in detail, says it is a fascinating substance.

"Concrete is relatively inexpensive. It's a forgiving material—it can be mixed by ordinary laborers, and used in climates ranging from the South Pole to the tropical mid part of the Earth. It can also get hard under water."

### **Environmental impact**

But all that comes at a price to the environment. Thirty billion tons of concrete are manufactured globally each year.

The way that concrete is mixed is very simple says Professor Ulm.

"It's made out of cement. Cement is basically limestone and clay. Cement is then mixed with water to form this ubiquitous material which shapes our landscapes and cities."

This process of combining of water, cement paste, sand, and rock creates an awful lot of CO<sub>2</sub> gases—which are linked by some scientists to global warming—about five to 10% of the world's total emissions.

MIT wanted to see whether this could be lowered. After all, it has a habit of making giant steps from the tiniest of changes—so tiny in this case, it was invisible to the human eye.

Despite its availability all over the world and its ease of use, the molecular structure of concrete had remained elusive for decades. In particular one part of it—calcium silicate hydrate—refused all attempts to be analyzed under an electron microscope or by nano-indentation.

"Calcium silicate hydrate does not reveal its secrets easily," says Professor Hamlin Jennings.

"It's partly amorphous; it contains a lot of water, which evaporates, and the structure changes. So what you see in an electron microscope, which requires a vacuum, is substantially different from what is naturally there."

So the scientists turned to their laptops, and using cutting-edge computational mathematics, modelled the concrete on the screen at a molecular level.

In 2009, after three years of almost constant hard-drive rotation, all the atoms fell into place in a nice colorful stable pattern on the monitor. . . .

For the next two years one MIT academic in particular, Roland Pellenq, played what amounted to a really tedious video game. He moved, removed, changed, and added molecules to the traditional concrete model.

Then one day he made history. He re-invented concrete.

This version is stronger, more durable, and greener. They call it green concrete, not to be confused with the scores of other products already available labelled green concrete, that have mostly been transformed by marketing rather than molecular experts.

"Almost every civil-engineering department in the world, almost without exception, has a group of people who work on [the development of] concrete in one form or another," says Professor Jennings.

"They have beavered away trying this and trying that and the formulations have changed over the last 50 years, but not radically."

### **Test subject**

. . . Optimistically, the first structures to use the new technology are five years away from construction. MIT's job is done, but that job is only to provide a "proof of concept."

It's up to the worldwide building industry to take the new concrete and pour it through its paces.

The compound will be pulled, pushed, squeezed, frozen, flattened, and smashed until it begs for mercy from government regulators and industry panels. . . .

28

Their inventive phase will undoubtedly lead to a compelling innovative phase far from the Cambridge-based campus. But it's not hard to imagine all the possibilities, good and bad.

29

Fewer potholes on the roads? Fewer road works and traffic jams? Huge real-estate savings by companies and governments? And what will happen to the number of construction workers?

Longer-lasting buildings mean fewer workers, but higher buildings and longer bridges made with the new tougher cement paste might mean more jobs.

Nothing, as they say, is written in stone—or concrete.

\***flats:** a British term for apartment buildings

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## **Concrete Source: MIT Scientists Turn the Concrete Jungle Green**

*by Ian Hardy*

- 17 Which detail supports the central idea of the text?
- A " 'Concrete is maybe one of the oldest man-made materials on earth.' "
  - B "Thirty billion tons of concrete are manufactured globally each year."
  - C " 'Cement is basically limestone and clay.' "
  - D "This version is stronger, more durable, and greener. They call it green concrete."
- 18 Which statement answers why MIT conducted the research study of concrete?
- A "Let's face it—concrete is boring. Most of us recognize it instantly, when we see hideous flats and offices from the 1960s and 1970s, that for a brief moment were the cutting edge of architecture."
  - B " 'Concrete is relatively inexpensive. It's a forgiving material—it can be mixed by ordinary laborers, and used in climates ranging from the South Pole to the tropical mid part of the Earth. It can also get hard under water.' "
  - C "This process of combining of water, cement paste, sand, and rock creates an awful lot of CO<sub>2</sub> gases—which are linked by some scientists to global warming—about five to 10% of the world's total emissions."
  - D "Longer-lasting buildings mean fewer workers, but higher buildings and longer bridges made with the new tougher cement paste might mean more jobs."



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- 19 Which quote from the text suggests the future of concrete?
- A "Let's face it—concrete is boring."
  - B "When you meet the researchers, their passion for concrete becomes infectious."
  - C "The way that concrete is mixed is very simple says Professor Ulm."
  - D "This version is stronger, more durable, and greener."
- 20 What is the meaning of the word *innovative* in the sentence below from paragraph 28?
- "Their inventive phase will undoubtedly lead to a compelling innovative phase far from the Cambridge-based campus."
- A traditional
  - B creative
  - C distant
  - D recent
- 21 Which is a possible drawback of the use of green concrete?
- A a decrease in the cost of building over time
  - B a reduction of the number of potholes on roads
  - C a negative effect on the financial situation of construction workers
  - D an increase in the life span of building foundations

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- 22 What is the impact of the author's use of questions in paragraph 29?
- A It encourages the reader to develop a position on the topic of concrete.
  - B It allows the reader to reflect on the possibilities of using the new concrete.
  - C It creates background knowledge on the MIT studies of concrete.
  - D It persuades the reader to accept the author's position on green concrete.
- 23 What was the author's purpose for writing this text?
- A to highlight the need for a concrete that does not produce as much CO<sub>2</sub>
  - B to provide a detailed history of the uses of concrete
  - C to invite workers for a new invention currently planned at MIT
  - D to provide information about changes that needed to take place in the construction industry
- 24 Which statement summarizes this text?
- A Environmentally-friendly concrete is being developed by scientists.
  - B Concrete has been around for centuries and is used all around the world.
  - C It is impossible to recreate concrete in a laboratory setting.
  - D Concrete is the hardest substance found on Earth.

# **A Chilling Thrill Or Was It A Thrilling Chill?**

***by Karen Dowicz Haas***

My new school's ski trip seemed like a good idea to my mom, who was holding up the slick new ski jacket she'd just bought for me. Mom must have imagined me—her seventh-grade daughter, Carly—and my new rosy-cheeked friends sipping hot chocolate beside a roaring fire. Maybe she thought I'd spend the weekend dashing through the snow in a one-horse open sleigh, bells jingling.

After all, she knew I couldn't ski.

③

"So? You'll learn," she said, conveniently forgetting that I was nearly ten before I could manage a two-wheeler.

"But I don't really know anybody . . .," I said, afraid to admit the whole truth. I'd been in school for months and still had no friends.

"And what better way to get acquainted?" she said.

Obviously I had no clue.

After hours on the bus with rival boom boxes blaring the entire length of the New York State Thruway, we finally arrived at the slopes. The wind chill made the temperature feel like ten below, so I distributed the tubes of lip balm my thoughtful mother had sent to prevent chapping.

After my classmates smeared on smudge-proof, all-day protection, I snapped photos, the proof Mom wanted that I was having fun. My best shot was of some guys on the football team. Their lips had turned hot pink.

⑨

My ski lesson went well. I learned how to break skis. Bindings snapped off under my uncoordinated legs.

"It's OK," the instructor said. "That's supposed to happen. Sometimes it keeps you from getting hurt."

"Sometimes?"

He pointed to the plaster cast on his ankle. "Avoid the moguls," he said.

"Real estate moguls? Developers who turn mountains into ski resorts?"

"Nah," he said. "Moguls are mounds of snow. Bumps on the slope."

He repaired my skis and sent me toward a rope that was mysteriously moving up the mountain.

"Stick with the bunny slope," he said.

"Is the bunny named Godzilla?"

My pink-lipped classmates, who were either seasoned skiers or fearless fools, had deserted me and raced for the lift lines to Mounts Denali, Rushmore, and Vesuvius. I shuffled to Godzilla's leash, tucked in my lucky scarf, and grabbed on.

The icy rope slid through my mittens. My frostbitten fingers gripped tighter and harder but to no avail. Fidgety four-year-olds stiffened up behind me. As I turned to apologize, a knot reached my hands and dragged me up the hill with the force of a tidal wave.

It was only fitting that Beach Boys music started blasting out of the speakers in the lodge: "Surfin' U.S.A." Little kids in goofy hats surfed by me on snowboards. Slush swooshed into my face. My nose dripped into my lip balm.

Higher and higher I went up Mount Bunny until I reached the peak from which, theoretically, I would ski down.

22

I wiped my nose and surveyed the situation. I considered riding the rope back down, but the snickers from the snowboarders would be too humiliating. Peer pressure is a terrible thing, especially from kids half your age.

I reviewed what I'd learned. The instructor had said to point your ski tips together to stop. He called it "snowplowing." Where I'm from, we use a pickup truck with a giant blade in the front.

He kept saying to "slalom" down the mountain, a term I later realized means to zigzag. Frankly, I thought he'd said "salami." I figured they had a gourmet deli on the hill. All these people would need to eat.

25

With this wealth of knowledge, I slid off. I followed the tracks of the child who'd gone before me. Since her ski tips eventually plowed together, I stopped. No problem. Turning, however, took some maneuvering. I couldn't seem to do it.

Finally I squatted, figuring that the closer I was to the snow, the easier it would be to fall. Skis together, aimed directly at the ski-lodge door, I zipped down the hill.

The cold air suddenly turned fresh and exciting. I felt like an Olympic champion. At long last, the thrill of skiing! That my eyes were frozen shut only added zest.

I snowplowed to a stop and entered the lodge. My cheeks tingled from the warmth of the crowded room, and the biggest, most ridiculous smile took over my face.

"I'm still here," I said, practically bragging to the crowd. They didn't erupt with applause, but they didn't pelt me with snowballs either. Actually, nothing had changed. Just my attitude.

Without thinking twice, I went up to Marie, a girl from my math class. "Hi, I'm Carly," I said. "Fracture anything yet?"

We'd been studying fractions all week, but she missed the common denominator of my joke.

Her face reddened. "They had to stop the ski lift so I could get on," she said. "I wanted to die."

"Aw, that's nothing," said a kid named Joey as he leaned in. He took off his cool sunglasses. "I had to change my name and put on a disguise after the Ski Patrol chased me for going too fast."

"Look what happened to me!" said a guy behind them. He wore a bike helmet, and the exposed hair that peeked out around his face was frozen into stiff, curly ringlets. Matt Hall. We rode the same bus every day but hadn't said so much as "Hi" before.

"I did a belly flop to avoid the tree that jumped into my way," he said with a smile.

Marie and I laughed. And to my surprise, I discovered that my mother was right. I'd forgotten that I was a social misfit. What better way to get acquainted?

Matt, Joey, Marie, and I hit the slopes again.

The ski slopes? No way! Instead, we went dashing through the snow. No horse, no sleigh. We were the kids tobogganing near the lodge on the back of our ski jackets.



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## **A Chilling Thrill Or Was It A Thrilling Chill?**

*by Karen Dowicz Haas*

- 25 Which theme is found in this selection?
- A Learning to ski is challenging.
  - B Traveling away from home is exciting.
  - C Trying new things is a great way to meet new friends.
  - D Starting at a new school is scary.
- 26 What does paragraph 3 reveal about the relationship between the narrator and her mother?
- A The narrator doubts her mother.
  - B The mother does not appreciate her daughter.
  - C The mother and daughter argue often.
  - D The narrator trusts her mother's judgment.
- 27 How does the author's choice of words in paragraph 9 affect the meaning of the text?
- A It shows that Carly was quickly learning to become a good skier.
  - B It shows that Carly had a natural talent for skiing.
  - C It shows that Carly was having a difficult time learning to ski.
  - D It shows that Carly understood everything about skiing.

## GRADE 6 READING—RELEASED ITEMS



- 28 Which of the statements made by the narrator shows that she knows little about skiing?
- A "I distributed the tubes of lip balm my thoughtful mother had sent to prevent chapping."
  - B "He repaired my skis and sent me toward a rope that was mysteriously moving up the mountain."
  - C "A knot reached my hands and dragged me up the hill with the force of a tidal wave."
  - D "Skis together, aimed directly at the ski-lodge door, I zipped down the hill."
- 29 What is the effect of using the word *humiliating* instead of the word *embarrassing* in paragraph 22?
- A It explains why Carly is trying to avoid peer pressure.
  - B It lessens the effect of peer pressure on Carly.
  - C It shows the increased amount of peer pressure Carly feels.
  - D It describes the first time Carly experiences peer pressure.
- 30 What does the word *maneuvering* mean in paragraph 25?
- A falling slowly
  - B moving exactly
  - C stepping quickly
  - D sliding unexpectedly

# Answer key

Question	Answer	Standard	Type	Points
1	B	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
2	B	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
3	C	RI.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
4	A	L.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
5	D	RI.6.5	Multiple Choice	1
6	D	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
7	A	RI.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
8	D	RI.6.8	Multiple Choice	1
9	B	RI.6.2	Multiple Choice	1
10	D	L.6.5.a	Multiple Choice	1
11	B	RI.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
12	A	RI.6.3	Multiple Choice	1
13	B	L.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
14	A	RI.6.5	Multiple Choice	1
15	C	RI.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
16	B	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
17	D	RI.6.2	Multiple Choice	1
18	C	RL.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
19	D	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
20	B	RI.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
21	C	RI.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
22	B	RI.6.5	Multiple Choice	1
23	A	RI.6.6	Multiple Choice	1
24	A	RI.6.2	Multiple Choice	1
25	C	RL.6.2	Multiple Choice	1
26	A	RL.6.3	Multiple Choice	1
27	C	RL.6.4	Multiple Choice	1
28	B	RL.6.1	Multiple Choice	1
29	C	L.6.5.a	Multiple Choice	1
30	B	L.6.4	Multiple Choice	1

# WRITING PROMPT FOR SUMMER ENRICHMENT:

## **"Icarus and Daedalus"**

by Josephine Preston Peabody

Among all those mortals who grew so wise that they learned the secrets of the gods, none was more cunning than Daedalus.

He once built, for King Minos of Crete, a wonderful Labyrinth of winding ways so cunningly tangled up and twisted around that, once inside, you could never find your way out again without a magic clue. But the king's favor veered with the wind, and one day he had his master architect imprisoned in a tower. Daedalus managed to escape from his cell; but it seemed impossible to leave the island, since every ship that came or went was well guarded by order of the king.

At length, watching the sea-gulls in the air,—the only creatures that were sure of liberty,—he thought of a plan for himself and his young son Icarus, who was captive with him.

Little by little, he gathered a store of feathers great and small. He fastened these together with thread, moulded them in with wax, and so fashioned two great wings like those of a bird. When they were done, Daedalus fitted them to his own shoulders, and after one or two efforts, he found that by waving his arms he could winnow the air and cleave it, as a swimmer does the sea. He held himself aloft, wavered this way and that, with the wind, and at last, like a great fledgling, he learned to fly.

Without delay, he fell to work on a pair of wings for the boy Icarus, and taught him carefully how to use them, bidding him beware of rash adventures among the stars. "Remember," said the father, "never to fly very low or very high, for the fogs about the earth would weigh you down, but the blaze of the sun will surely melt your feathers apart if you go too near."

For Icarus, these cautions went in at one ear and out by the other. Who could remember to be careful when he was to fly for the first time? Are birds careful? Not they! And not an idea remained in the boy's head but the one joy of escape.

The day came, and the fair wind that was to set them free. The father bird put on his wings, and, while the light urged them to be gone, he waited to see that all was well with Icarus, for the two could not fly hand in hand. Up they rose, the boy after his father. The hateful ground of Crete sank beneath them; and the country folk, who caught a glimpse of them when they were high above the tree-tops, took it for a vision of the gods,—Apollo, perhaps, with Cupid after him.

At first there was a terror in the joy. The wide vacancy of the air dazed them,—a glance downward made their brains reel. But when a great wind filled their wings, and Icarus felt himself sustained, like a halcyon-bird in the hollow of a wave, like a child uplifted by his mother, he forgot everything in the world but joy. He forgot Crete and the other islands that he had passed over: he saw but vaguely that winged thing in the distance before him that was his father Daedalus. He longed for one draught of flight to quench the thirst of his captivity: he stretched out his arms to the sky and made towards the highest heavens.

Alas for him! Warmer and warmer grew the air. Those arms, that had seemed to uphold him, relaxed. His wings wavered, drooped. He fluttered his young hands vainly,—he was falling,—and in that terror he remembered. The heat of the sun had melted the wax from his wings; the feathers were falling, one by one, like snowflakes; and there was none to help.

He fell like a leaf tossed down the wind, down, down, with one cry that overtook Daedalus far away. When he returned, and sought high and low for the poor boy, he saw nothing but the bird-like feathers afloat on the water, and he knew that Icarus was drowned.

The nearest island he named Icaria, in memory of the child; but he, in heavy grief, went to the temple of Apollo in Sicily, and there hung up his wings as an offering. Never again did he attempt to fly.

**6th Grade English  
Practice  
WRITING PROMPT**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Read the following prompt and write your complete response in the answer document.

**You have read “Icarus and Daedalus,” a passage about a son and father imprisoned in a tower. How does the tone of the passage change as a result of the characters’ decisions and actions?**

Provide key details and examples from the passage to support your writing. Your writing will be scored based on the development of ideas, organization of writing, and language conventions of grammar, usage, and mechanics.

# RUBRIC FOR SCORING STUDENT WRITING:

Summative Writing Rubric				
Name: _____				
Date: _____				
Topic: _____				
<b><u>Content and Development</u></b>				
Maintains a clear central ideas				
Contains insightful and relevant details				
Sustains focus				
1	2	3	4	
<b><u>Organization</u></b>				
Shows a clear organization				
Shows evidence of a plan				
Uses smooth transitions				
Provides a clear introduction, body, and conclusion				
1	2	3	4	
<b><u>Voice</u></b>				
Uses precise and vivid vocabulary				
Uses effective phrasing				
Varies sentence structure				
1	2	3	4	
<b><u>Conventions</u></b>				
Structures sentences correctly				
Makes few errors in capitalization, punctuation, and spelling that do not detract from meaning.				
1	2	3	4	
<b>Total:</b> _____				
<b>Suggested Grading Scale</b>				
16-13 (A) 95				
12-9 (B) 88				
8-5 (C) 80				
4-0 (D) 74				
Illegible, Off topic, Did not follow directions=0				