

Building Comprehension

Grade 6 (Vocabulary Gr. 4)

The high-interest, low-vocabulary stories in this book feature diversified subject matter. The contents include:

- *Famous figures*
- *Sports personalities and events*
- *Mysteries*
- *Visual and performing arts*
- *Disasters*
- *Excerpts from legends and mythology*
- *Amazing facts and wonders in science and nature*

The stories are written with a controlled vocabulary averaging two readability levels below the content. A male-female, ethnic, and geographic balance has been maintained in the selections. Follow-up questions reinforce key comprehension skills. These include: recognition of main idea, significant details, word meaning in context, inference, and drawing conclusions.

Thoughtful discussions and on-going projects can be generated from many of the stories. Where space permits, a follow-through activity has been included to lead to self-motivated reading or to valuable discussion, also allowing the teacher opportunity to award extra credit. Questioning format varies to avoid predictability.

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Children's Museums

Most museums are for "looking." But children's museums are for "doing." There is a lot to do at these museums. Visitors hardly know where to begin!

Let's start at the National Children's Museum near Washington, DC. This museum includes a small model of a town called My Town. Children can visit the pizza parlor and talk about town issues. They can run for a government office. There is even a fire truck where they can solve problems. Children explore the town, have fun, and learn all at the same time.

Another area in the museum shows children the larger world. They can see homes from different areas of the world. A kitchen area has foods that people in other countries enjoy. Children can also see ways that other people talk and write. There are examples of writing in many languages.

Hundreds of children's museums like this can be found across the world. Many are in the United States. One of the largest children's museums in the world is in Indianapolis, Indiana. Children can learn about trains, mummies, dinosaurs, and more in one place. There is even an exhibit about children who have made a difference in the world.



Because children's museums are about hands-on learning, there are interactive exhibits. Visitors may be able to try on clothes from other countries or play musical instruments. They can build with blocks and sand. They can also make water and boats move wherever they want.

Even though it is named for children, these museums are enjoyed by adults as well. The idea of the museums is that you learn by doing. Operating pulleys and levers, holding live animals, and programming computers are just a few of the other ways that visitors may learn and play. Adults and children can all learn something new this way.

Main Idea

1. Why are children's museums for "doing"?
 - a. Children can look at many exhibits.
 - b. Children get to try activities at the exhibits.
 - c. Workers at the museum do a lot of things.

Significant Details

2. What can you learn in My Town?
 - a. how to run for an office in government
 - b. about other countries
 - c. how to drive a fire truck

Context Clues

3. Because children's museums are about hands-on learning, there are **interactive exhibits**.
 - a. talks about different subjects
 - b. things for visitors to view
 - c. activities visitors can do

Inference

4. Would a child get into trouble for touching an exhibit at the National Children's Museum? Why or why not? _____

5. Would the National Children's Museum be a good place for a class field trip? Why or why not? _____

Following Through

6. Design your own exhibit for a children's museum. Tell how it would work and what visitors could learn from it.

The Old Woman of Carcassonne

(Adapted from the French folktale)

Once, long ago, an evil king and his army invaded the country of France. They decided to take over a town called Carcassonne. But the French people of Carcassonne locked the gates to their town before the enemy could enter.

Weeks went by. The army still surrounded the town. People in the town began running out of food. They were in danger of starving. The mayor of Carcassonne called a town meeting. He announced that he would have to let in the enemy. At least then the people might be able to get some food.

But an elderly woman in the town stopped him. "The king and his army must be starving, too," she pointed out. "Bring me a cow, and I'll show you how we can win."

After a careful search, a cow was found hiding in a farmer's house. The woman then asked for grain. Everyone gave what little grain they could.

"What are you doing?" demanded the mayor as he watched her feed the precious grain to the cow.

"Just wait," she told him.



That night, she let the cow out of the town's gate, and in the morning, it was discovered by the enemy. Since they were hungry themselves, the army killed the cow and found it had been fed grain. This surprised the evil king. He thought that the people in the town were out of food by now and ready to surrender. With well-fed cows like this wandering around, the people of Carcassonne could stay locked inside their gate for a long time.

Hungry and weary, the king called his army together and retreated. The town of Carcassonne was free thanks to the clever thinking of the old woman.

Main Idea

1. How did the old woman save the town?
 - a. She attacked the enemy.
 - b. She tricked the enemy into thinking the town would not surrender.
 - c. She convinced the mayor to surrender to the enemy.

Significant Details

2. Why did the mayor want to surrender?
 - a. He wanted to buy more cows.
 - b. The town was in danger of starving.
 - c. The enemy began attacking the town.

Context Clues

3. The army *surrounded* the town.
 - a. attacked the town
 - b. broke inside the town
 - c. stood all around the town

Inference

4. Why was the mayor angry when the woman fed grain to the cow?
 - a. He didn't think the plan would work.
 - b. His starving townspeople needed the grain.
 - c. He didn't like the old woman.

Drawing Conclusions

5. Why did the woman's plan work?
 - a. The evil king only wanted a little food to eat.
 - b. The king's army was not very strong.
 - c. The king believed the townspeople had enough food to last them a long time.