

# **Building Comprehension**

## Grade 7 (Vocabulary Gr. 5)

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

- *Famous figures*
- *Sports personalities and events*
- *Ghosts, monsters, and 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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### **Authors**

Ellen M. Dolan  
Sue D. Royals

### **Artists**

Jeanne Robertson  
Lee Brubaker  
Don O' Connor

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# Table of Contents

HyperSoar Jets .....	1
Special Olympics.....	2
The Way to Johnson City.....	3
Ken Griffey, Jr.....	4
Food of the Future .....	5
Will Smith .....	6
The Bohemians .....	7
Golda Meir .....	8
The Kibbutz.....	9
Julie on the Run.....	10
Ice Golfing.....	11
Edgar Rice Burroughs .....	13
Silver and Gold.....	14
Thunder on the Mountain .....	15
Julia Morgan .....	16
Hearst Castle .....	18
Ghost of Blanton Hall .....	20
White Water Rafting.....	22
Ansel Adams.....	24
What’s a Chunnel? .....	26
Aladdin’s Lamp .....	28
Isaac Asimov.....	30
The Water Clock.....	32
The Camp-Out .....	33
Langston Hughes .....	34
Learning about African Art.....	35
About the Invisible Man .....	36
Sequoia and the Talking Leaves.....	37
Mikey Mouse Gardening.....	38
Close Encounter .....	39
Junior Ski Patrol .....	41
Reversing Falls .....	42
Supernova—The Exploding Star .....	43

# Special Olympics

Training for the Olympics takes every bit of strength and determination a competitor can gather. Many people have strength and determination, but because they have an intellectual disability, they are not able to participate in the Olympics.

In 1968, the Special Olympics for the intellectually disabled was started, and a whole wonderful world was opened to many people. Contestants could participate in many events from swimming to racing. The events are now run on local, national, and international levels. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of the late President John F. Kennedy, began Camp Shriver, an athletic camp for children with intellectual disabilities, right in her own backyard. Using money from the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation, Camp Shriver moved from Eunice's backyard to local camps and schools across the country.

Interest has spread from the United States to over 170 foreign countries. Now competitions are held internationally. They follow the same form as the Olympic Games, specializing in both summer and winter events. Competitors come from all over the world. Children and adults are of many ages and have many different levels of ability. Many of those taking part may need help remembering the rules of the game or competition. But no matter what their level of ability, these athletes are all there for the challenge and to do their very best.

Privately-funded programs provide coaches, trainers, and special equipment for the Special Olympics. Coaches and trainers receive special instruction on coaching and working with athletes with intellectual disabilities. Special Olympics athletes have to train very hard to participate in their events. They often have to train harder than other athletes because they may have many unusual obstacles to overcome. Coaches and trainers work with the Special Olympics athletes all year. Skill and confidence levels are increased, and soon athletes are ready for competition.

Thousands of volunteers are ready, too. Volunteers are at the Special Olympics to organize teams, line up athletes, and time the events. Coaches and officials are always needed. Health-care professionals are also used for the games. These people give free health screenings to all the athletes. Students in high school or college can also volunteer to help at Special Olympics events. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, contact your local Special Olympics chapter.

Special Olympics athletes compete to challenge themselves, as well as have fun. They know they have beaten the odds and have done their personal best.

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## Main Idea

1. Special Olympics are held for
  - a. skiers.
  - b. foreign athletes.
  - c. intellectually disabled athletes.

## Significant Details

2. The Special Olympics is partly financed by
  - a. the Rhodes scholarship fund.
  - b. the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation.
  - c. foreign countries.

## Context Clues

3. An *obstacle* is
  - a. anything that gets in the way and blocks progress.
  - b. a prize.
  - c. a foundation.

4. A *competitor* is
  - a. a volunteer.
  - b. one who takes part in a contest.
  - c. a coach.

## Drawing Conclusions

5. List at least three different feelings or emotions you might experience if you competed in an event in the Olympics.

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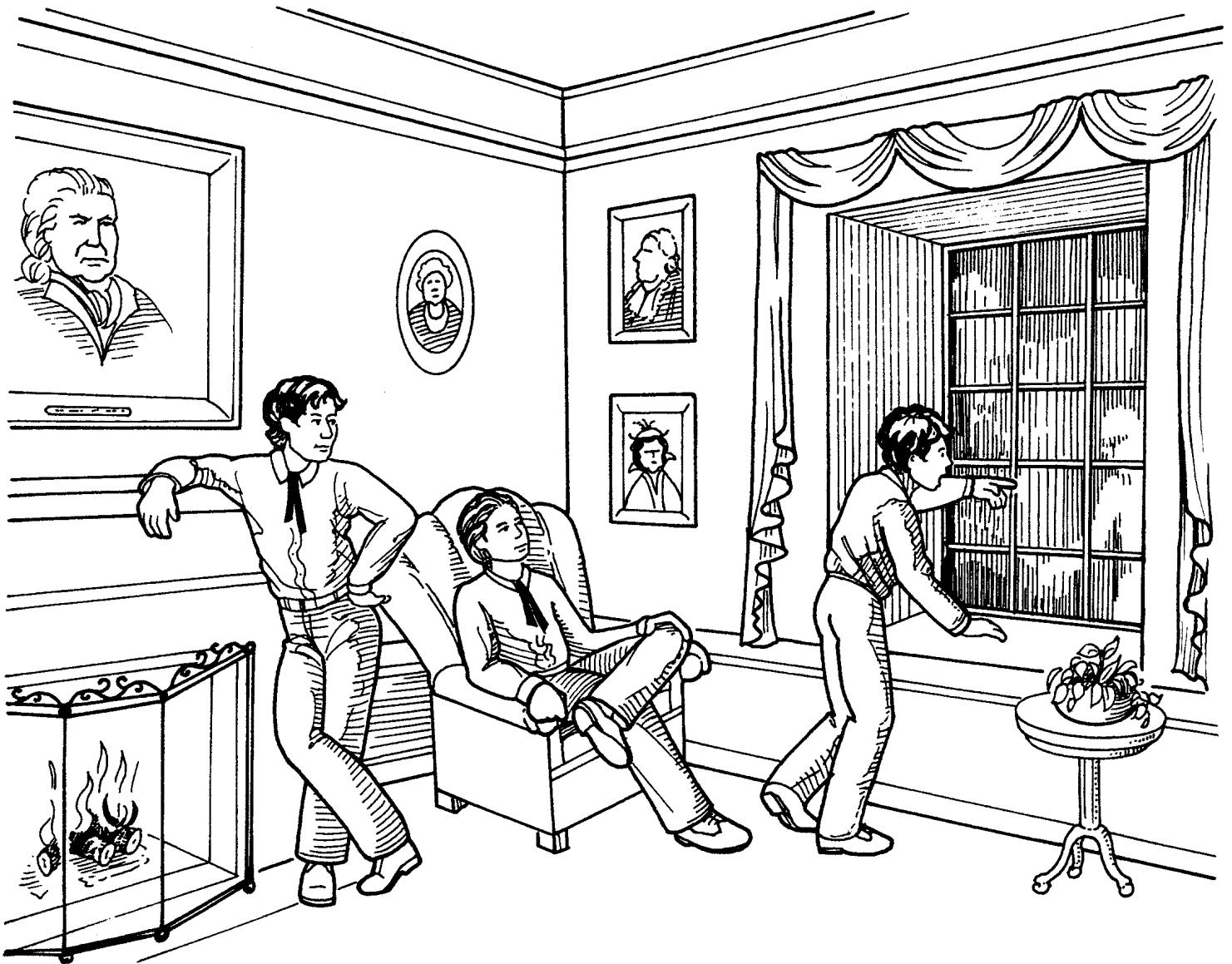
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## Following Through

6. Read about athletes who have competed in the Special Olympics. Find out how their disabilities interfere with their sports, and what methods they use to overcome these disabilities.



# Ghost of Blanton Hall



In New Jersey in the late 1800s, Blanton Hall, a boys' school, stood at the top of a tall hill. Nearby, there was a river with strong currents. Although parents admired the school for its teaching, the boys liked the sports offered there. Each year, the big sporting event was the rowing race with several schools. Blanton Hall's biggest rival was Gainsville, a similar school in New York.

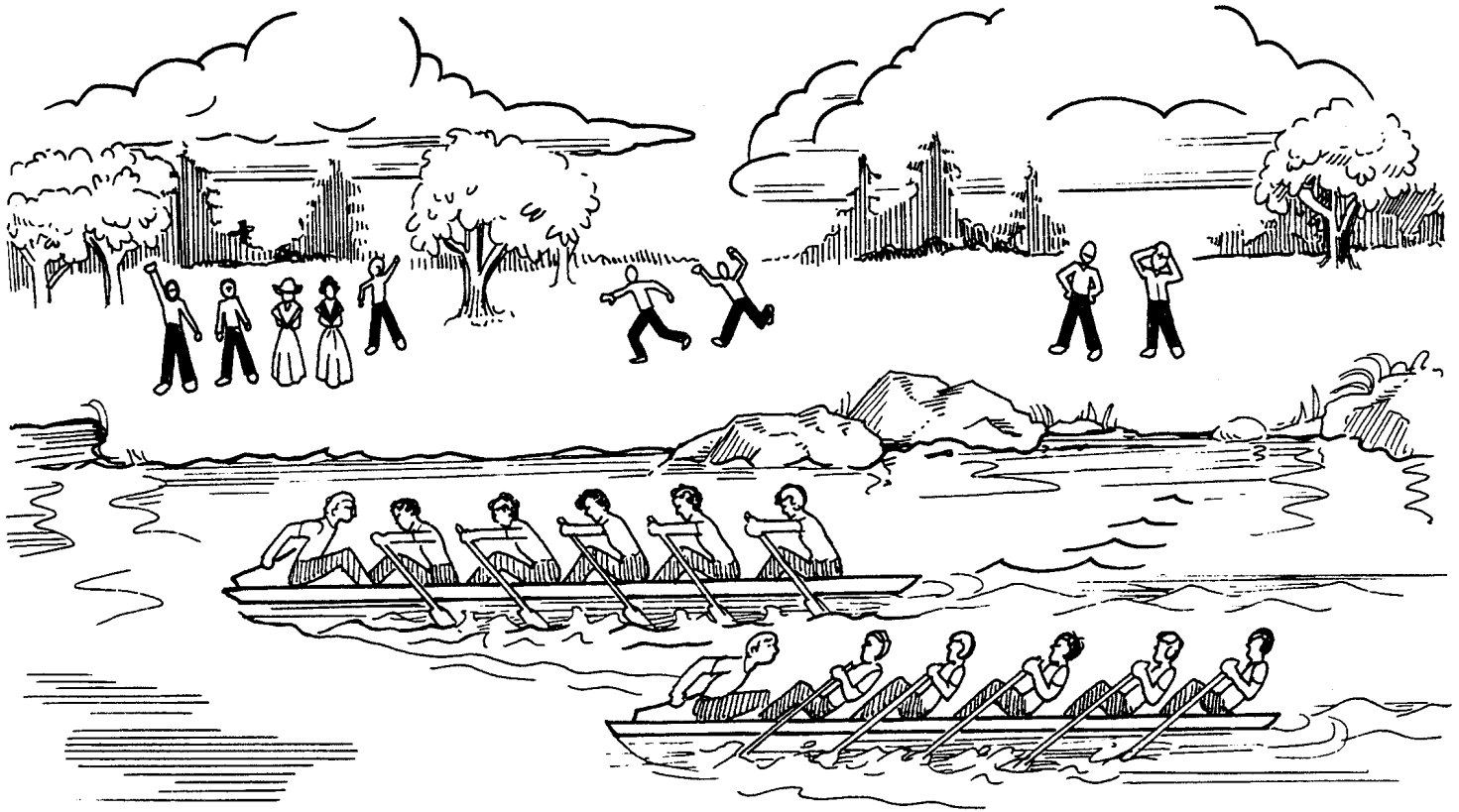
About a week before the 1873 contest with Gainsville, a strange thing happened. After dinner one night, most of the boys were relaxing or reading in the main hall. Suddenly, a boy jumped up and shouted, "Look! At the window!"

All the boys turned to the large window. Outside there stood the ghostly figure of a young boy. His long hair was wet, his fine clothes were smeared with mud, and his face looked very sad. By the time the boys had rushed to the window, the figure had vanished. Many times during that week, the sad little figure appeared at a window. Once, a younger boy met the ghost on the stairs. He was so frightened that he ran to his room and would not get out of bed for two days.

*continued...*

The school professors and other town scholars began to check into old records. They found out that there had been a young boy of that same description at the school many years before. He had been a champion rower, but one year during the race against Gainsville, he fell overboard. His body had never been found. The rowing coach realized that Blanton Hall had never beaten Gainsville since that time.

The night before the 1873 contest, the dripping boy was seen in three different places around the school. The students were definitely getting nervous but went on with their plans for the race. The day of the contest was bright and clear. At 8:00 a.m., the race began. Possibly the sad little ghost was helping them, because that year, the Blanton Hall rowers won the race. The boy with the dripping hair was never seen again.



### Main Idea

1. Who was the ghost of Blanton Hall?
  - a. a young student from Gainsville
  - b. a champion rower from Blanton Hall
  - c. an old man who used to own Blanton Hall

### Significant Details

2. What happened at the race in 1873?
  - a. Blanton Hall rowers won the race.
  - b. A young rower fell overboard.
  - c. The ghost appeared.

### Context Clues

3. Gainsville's team was their biggest *rival*.
  - a. a team that has never been beaten
  - b. a team of champion rowers
  - c. a team you would most like to beat

### Inference

4. Do you think the ghost of Blanton Hall will be seen again? Why or why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Drawing Conclusions

5. Some people don't believe ghost stories. Were the boys at Blanton Hall able to convince others of their stories?
  - a. Yes. School professors checked old records.
  - b. No. The other teammates would not row with them.
  - c. Yes. The town scholars saw the ghost too.

### Following Through

6. Get a book on ghosts or poltergeists. Find out what is used as evidence to support ghost sightings.