

# **Building Comprehension**

## Grade 9 (Vocabulary Gr. 7)

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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# The Drummer of Tedworth

One of the earliest poltergeist cases ever recorded happened in Tedworth, England, in 1661. Poltergeist is a German word meaning “noisy ghost,” and this ghost in Tedworth was certainly noisy. The weird experience started when John Mompesson, a respected magistrate, was bothered by a terrible noise. He discovered it was a beggar, William Drury, who had been walking the streets of the town for several days, beating his drum and demanding money. Mompesson and the townspeople were very annoyed by Drury, so the magistrate had the drummer arrested and his drum confiscated. William Drury was very angry. He put a spell on the Mompesson house and said he would not remove it until his drum was returned.

Then the trouble began! Night after night, drumbeats could be heard in the Mompesson house. An invisible drummer began following the Mompesson children. The drummer even beat out military songs on their beds.

Still drumming, the poltergeist began doing other things as well. The children had their shoes thrown about and their hair pulled. They were often tossed out of bed. Mrs. Mompesson found her Bible in the fireplace and ashes in the porridge bowls. A friend visiting the Mompessons found that all the money in his pockets had turned black.

Everyone was shocked when John discovered his favorite horse lying on the ground with its hind leg jammed in its mouth.

Joseph Glanvill, the chaplain of King Charles II, came to investigate the mysterious happenings. He witnessed some incredible things at the Mompesson house, but could not discover a cause for the disturbances. The drummings continued for two years and then stopped as suddenly as they had started. No one has heard them since.



## Main Idea

1. What did the people of Tedworth think caused the strange happenings at the Mompesson house? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Circle the words you think describe the case of the Drummer of Tedworth.
  - a. eerie
  - b. pleasant
  - c. serene
  - d. delicate
  - e. unnatural
  - f. terrifying

## Context Clues

3. The respected *magistrate* came to town.
  - a. salesman
  - b. town official
  - c. doctor
4. Joseph Glanvill came to *investigate* the occurrences.
  - a. look into
  - b. inform
  - c. duplicate
5. He witnessed many *incredible* things.
  - a. immature
  - b. hard to see
  - c. hard to believe
6. To *confiscate* means to
  - a. give back something.
  - b. take away something.
  - c. confuse.

## Can You Solve This Mystery?

Maria Hernandez, 49, was a chemical engineer who worked for a large plastics manufacturer. Her office was on the fifth floor between those of her manager (Mr. Brent) and John (another engineer). The office was just large enough for Maria's necessary things. Against one wall was a filing cabinet and computer. On the opposite wall was a bookcase filled with math books and music CDs. Maria's favorite songs were there and she often played them at lunchtime to relax. On the desk were folders, pens, pencils, a telephone, and photographs of Maria's parents. She was their only child. They had been able to give her the best training possible.

The training paid off. One Friday morning, Maria told Mr. Brent that she had created a new formula for making better plastic bottles. Mr. Brent was pleased and told her she could mix the formula with materials in the plant over the weekend. He promised to tell the watchman to let her into the building.

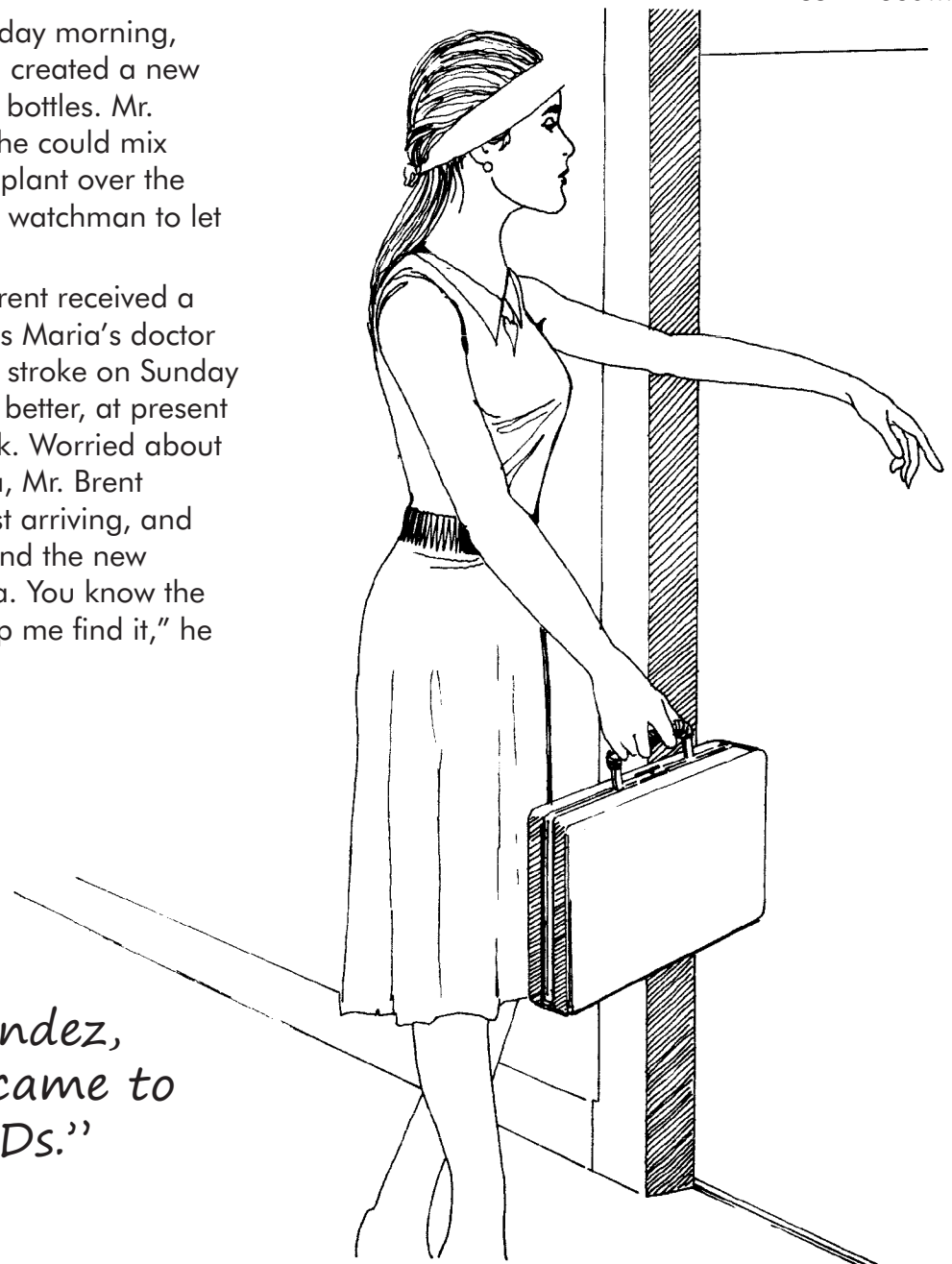
Early Monday morning, Mr. Brent received a call from a nearby hospital. It was Maria's doctor reporting that she had suffered a stroke on Sunday evening. Although she would get better, at present she could neither move nor speak. Worried about Maria and her important formula, Mr. Brent hurried to the plant. John was just arriving, and Mr. Brent told him about Maria and the new formula. "I must find that formula. You know the way Maria works. Come and help me find it," he said.

The two men went to Maria's office and began to search. Suddenly the door opened and a young girl walked in. "Good morning," she said. "I'm Inez Hernandez, Maria's niece. I came to get my aunt's CDs so she could listen to her favorites while she gets better."

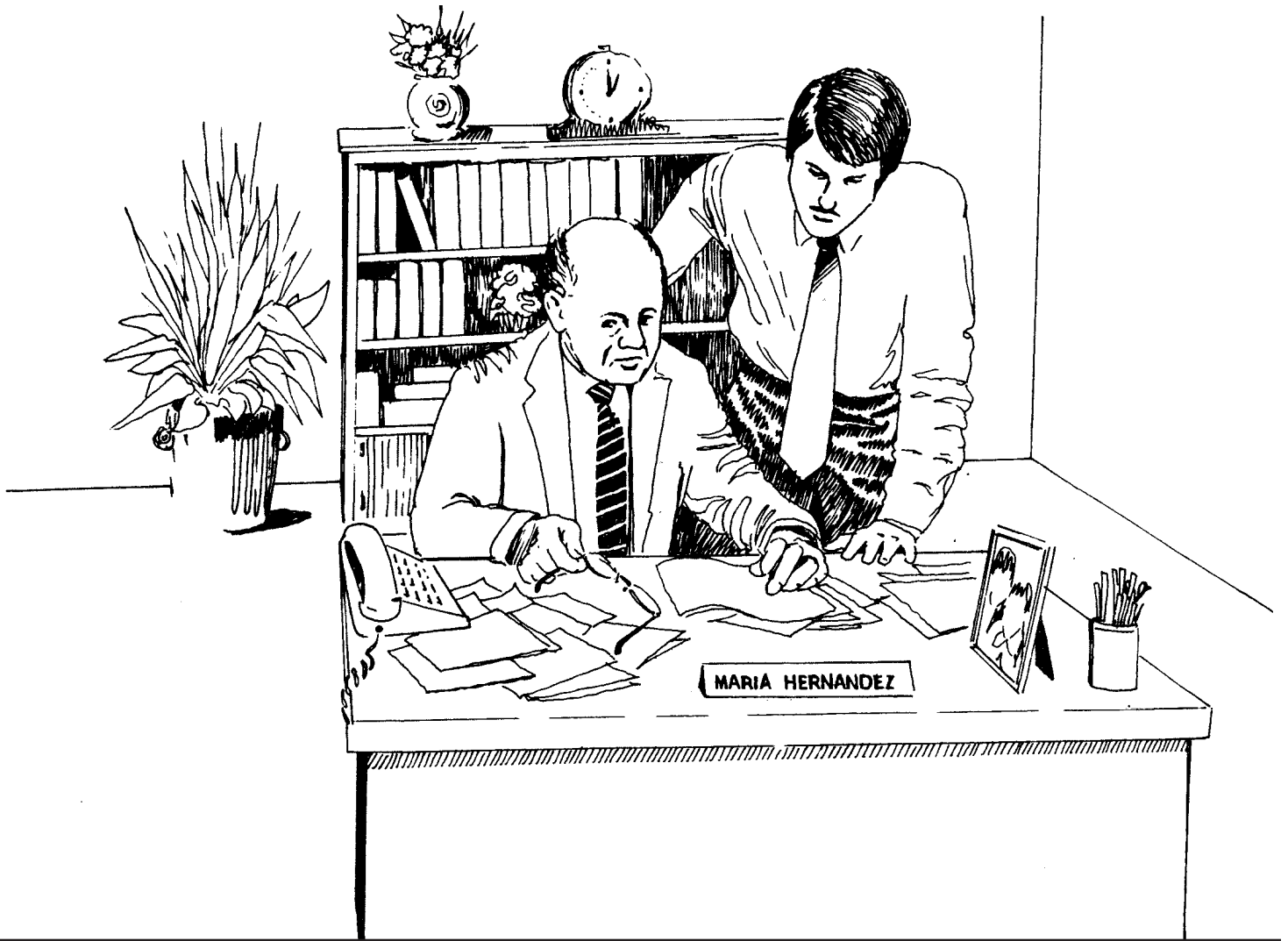
Mr. Brent nodded and the two men continued to look. Inez began to fill a briefcase with the CDs. John shut the last desk drawer just as Inez snapped the briefcase shut. They both started towards the door. "Stop right there," said Mr. Brent. "I know who has the formula."

How did he know?

*continued...*



*"I'm Inez Hernandez,  
Maria's niece. I came to  
get my aunt's CDs."*



### Inference

1. Maria's new formula would probably
  - a. contain water.
  - b. make profits for the company.
  - c. not work correctly.

### Drawing Conclusions

2. Mr. Brent thought the formula was
  - a. very important.
  - b. in Maria's desk.
  - c. at the hospital.

### Context Clues

3. A *niece* is a
  - a. best friend.
  - b. neighbor.
  - c. daughter of one's brother or sister.
4. When Maria *created* a new formula she \_\_\_\_ it.
  - a. typed
  - b. lost
  - c. produced

### Significant Details

5. Maria was a
  - a. railroad engineer.
  - b. chemical engineer.
  - c. photographer.
6. Maria's formula would make better
  - a. plastic bottles.
  - b. CDs
  - c. photographs.

Mr. Brent became suspicious when Inez said she was Maria's niece. As an only child, Maria could not have a niece. He also remembered that another plastics company was looking for a new formula on bottles, too. He suspected Inez had been sent to steal it. He was right. The formula was on a CD, and Inez had bribed the watchman to tell her where to find it.

**Solution:**

