High-Interest/Low-Readability

STRANGE & UNEXPLAINED

Boost reading comprehension skills!

Encourage reading confidence!

INCLUDES:

- Fascinating nonfiction stories to engage struggling readers
- One- and two-page reading selections
- Multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and true/false questions
- Short-answer writing practice
- Comprehension questions that familiarize students with standardized-test wording

by Kathryn Wheeler

Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc.
# Table of Contents

- Introduction .......................................................... 4
- What Was That?! ....................................................... 5
- Can People Read Minds? ............................................ 7
- Stars on Earth .......................................................... 9
- The Green Children .................................................. 11
- Footprints in the Snow .............................................. 13
- Honest Abe’s Return ................................................ 15
- Lights from the Deep ................................................ 17
- The Ink Monkey ....................................................... 19
- Friend or Foe? .......................................................... 21
- Taking Flight ........................................................... 23
- It’s Raining Cats and . . . Frogs? ................................. 25
- The Ghost of a King? ............................................... 27
- Crop Circles ............................................................ 29
- Flores Man Floors Scientists ...................................... 31
- The Missing Mine .................................................... 34
- The Pit of the Pirates ................................................ 37
- Monster in the Loch .................................................. 40
- Where Is Amelia? ..................................................... 43
- Lines in the Desert ................................................... 46
- A Ship without a Crew............................................... 49
- Disappearing Act ...................................................... 52
- The Lost City of Z ..................................................... 55
- A Circle of Stones .................................................... 59
- Answer Key ............................................................. 63
Introduction

Struggling readers in the upper-elementary and middle grades face a difficult challenge. While many of their peers are reading fluently, they are still working to acquire vocabulary and comprehension skills. They face a labyrinth of standardized tests, which can be a nightmare for struggling readers. And, they face another major difficulty—the challenge of remaining engaged and interested while working to improve reading skills.

High-Interest/Low-Readability Nonfiction: Strange and Unexplained can help! All of the articles in this book are written at a fourth-grade reading level with an interest level from grade 4 to adult.

Throughout the book, the stories use repeated vocabulary to help students acquire and practice new words. The stories are crafted to grab students’ attention while honing specific reading skills, such as uncovering author’s purpose; defining vocabulary; making predictions; and identifying details, synonyms, antonyms, and figures of speech. Most of the comprehension questions parallel standardized-test formats so that students can become familiar with the structure without the pressure of a testing situation. And, the articles even utilize the familiar “Next Page” arrows and “Stop” signs seen in most standardized tests. The questions also include short-answer formats for writing practice.

Best of all, this book will build confidence in students as they learn that reading is fun, enjoyable, and fascinating!

Note: Stories that include measurements, such as a weight or distance, also feature a convenient conversion box with measurements rounded to the nearest hundredth. Students will find this useful as they become familiar with converting standard and metric measurements. If students are not currently studying measurement conversion, simply instruct them to ignore the box. Or, cover it when making copies of a story.
Imagine you are sitting in your home. You are watching TV. Suddenly, the building shakes. There's a huge noise, like something exploded. When you go outside to look, you find that a huge piece of ice has crashed into your roof!

In 1990, this happened to a family in the state of West Virginia in the United States. A giant block of ice fell from the sky and crashed into their satellite dish! It was two feet long and 18 inches wide. It weighed 50 pounds. All around it were other pieces of ice. Some pieces were the size of baseballs.

The weather that day was clear. The “ice bomb” was not made of hail. The ice had not spilled from an airplane. Scientists knew this because it was just water—there were no chemicals in it. No one could say where the ice bomb came from.

Scientists can’t explain the many other reported ice bombs either. One man in the state of New Jersey found a 70-pound block of ice in his house. It had crashed through the roof of his kitchen. In Germany, a worker on a rooftop was hit by an ice bomb that was six feet wide.

There have even been whole showers of ice bombs. This happened in Spain in 2000. Even though Spain is known for its hot weather, big chunks of ice started to fall on towns across the country. In one city, eight ice bombs hit a street in the middle of the afternoon. Another ice-bomb “shower” took place in Colombia. In this fall of ice bombs, an entire village lost their houses. Crops in the fields were crushed.

Are the ice bombs from outer space? Are they parts of an exploded moon or comet? Or, is there a simpler answer to this strange series of events? So far, scientists cannot tell us anything about the ice-bomb mystery.

Conversions
2 feet = 0.61 meters
18 inches = 45.72 centimeters
50 pounds = 22.68 kilograms
70 pounds = 31.75 kilograms
6 feet = 1.83 meters
What Was That?!}

Answer the questions below.

1. The story tells about ice bombs in all of the following places EXCEPT—
   a. West Virginia.
   b. New York.
   c. Spain.
   d. Germany.

2. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.
   The weather that day was clear.
   Which of the following is clear weather?
   a. warm and stormy
   b. snowing
   c. sunny; not cloudy
   d. cloudy and rainy

3. Finish the following sentence to tell about an ice event in 2000.
   People in one city saw eight _______ _________ hit a ________________ in the country of __________________ .

4. What is one feature of ice bombs?
   a. They don’t fall during storms. Instead, they usually fall during sunny weather.
   b. They are small, like hail.
   c. They fall only in North America.
   d. all of the above

5. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.
   So far, scientists cannot tell us anything about the ice-bomb mystery.
   What other word for mystery could be used in this sentence?
   a. experiment
   b. event
   c. puzzle
   d. series

6. How did scientists know that the ice bomb in West Virginia was not spilled from an airplane?
   Scientists did not find any ________________ in it.

7. Circle three adjectives that tell about ice bombs.
   huge       soft       sudden
   quiet      dark       mysterious
The phone rings. Even though you haven’t talked to her all year, somehow you know it’s your cousin . . . before you pick up the phone. Later, you are watching a TV show. Before the show gets to its surprise ending, you already know what is going to happen. The next day, you go to the mall with your brother. While you are still in the parking lot, you suddenly feel that he’s going to find a blue shirt and buy it. And, he does!

Are these examples of ESP, or extrasensory perception? Some people think so. ESP is the ability to predict something that will happen. Some people who believe in ESP think that it is linked to reading another person’s mind.

In the 1930s, a scientist named J. B. Rhine tested people to see if they had ESP. He used a set of five cards. Each card showed a simple picture: a plus sign, a square, a circle, a star, or three wavy lines. One person looked at a card. He thought hard about the picture on the card to “send” it. The other person tried to guess which picture was on the card by reading the sender’s mind. Because there were five cards, each person had a chance of guessing one card right out of five. But, if someone got four out of five correct, Rhine thought that it showed that the person had ESP.

Some people thought that Rhine’s tests were bad. They said it might be too easy to cheat. Today, scientists have made harder tests. The “sender” looks at a picture on a TV screen. The “subject” is in a different room. The room is dim and quiet. The subject talks aloud about the picture that the sender is seeing. Later, the subject looks at the TV screen and tries to choose the pictures that were “sent.” Many times, it doesn’t work. Sometimes, the person tells about a picture in great detail. Is this ESP? Or, is it just luck? What do you think?
Can People Read Minds?

Answer the questions below.

1. Which of the following is the BEST definition of ESP?
   a. reading cards with symbols on them
   b. knowing the ending to a TV show
   c. the ability to predict what will happen
   d. seeing a picture in your mind

2. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.

   Some people who believe in ESP think that it is linked to reading another person’s mind.

   What is another word for linked?
   a. described
   b. connected
   c. sunk
   d. transferred

3. Which of the following is an opinion?
   a. ESP just has to be real because it is so interesting.
   b. Scientists are still testing people for ESP.
   c. J. B. Rhine was one of the first people who tested for ESP.
   d. Some people do not believe in ESP.

4. Why did some people think that J. B. Rhine’s tests were bad? Write your answer in a complete sentence.
   __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

5–7. Fill in the blanks to describe the sequence in J. B. Rhine’s experiments.

5. J. B. Rhine’s experiments used a total of __________ picture cards.

6. One person thought about the picture to “______________” it.

7. The other person tried to guess the _________________.

8. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.

   The “subject” is in a different room.

   Which of the following is the definition of subject as it is used in the sentence?
   a. the servant of a king or leader
   b. a person whose responses or answers are studied
   c. the main topic of a report
   d. a field of study in school
Some people are looking up at a group of low hills in west Texas. Suddenly, they see glowing, red-orange lights. Are they the headlights of cars on the highway? Are they the lights of campfires? The people shout and point. The lights are moving! But, they aren’t moving the way cars move. They go up in the air. They fall back to the earth. And then . . . they simply disappear!

Every night, people go to look at the famous Marfa lights. They are named for the town of Marfa, Texas. The lights can be seen east of the town when you look at the hills in the distance. There have been many theories about these strange lights over the years. One theory is that the lights are the headlights of cars driving down the road.

But, that could not be true. Settlers in the 1880s wrote about the lights. That was long before there were cars with headlights. At that time, pioneers thought the Marfa lights were the campfires of Apaches in the hills. When they would ride into the hills, they could not find evidence of campsites or fires. Later, the settlers learned that the Apaches, too, could see the lights. They said the lights were stars that had come down to Earth.

Some people say that the lights are moonlight shining on minerals in the hills. Others say they are made by gas from swamps. Some scientists have tried to prove that the lights really are light from planets or stars. They say this light is reflecting in a strange way on the hills. That doesn’t help us understand why the lights can “dance.” They move up and down, slow down, and speed up. These dancing “stars,” the Marfa lights, stay a mystery.
Stars on Earth

Answer the questions below.

1. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.

And then . . . they simply disappear!

Which of the following is an antonym for disappear?

a. vanish
b. leave
c. appeal
d. appear

2. From where did the Marfa lights get their name? Write your answer in a complete sentence.

______________________________________

______________________________________

______________________________________

3. Which of the following is NOT a feature of the Marfa lights?

a. They are always blue-white.
b. They move up and down.
c. They can speed up and slow down.
d. b. and c.

4.–8. Write T for true and F for false.

4. _______ Early settlers could not see the lights.

5. _______ The Apaches thought the lights were stars.

6. _______ People saw the lights before cars with headlights were invented.

7. _______ Early settlers thought the lights might be campfires.

8. _______ Some scientists think the lights are from stars or planets.

9. Choose the word that BEST completes the following sentence:

The Marfa lights can be seen outside of Marfa toward the ___________.

a. north
b. west
c. east
d. south

10. Circle the phrase about the Marfa lights that is NOT a theory discussed in the story.

reflected starlight
lights from boats
moonlight on minerals
stars coming down to Earth
swamp gas
**Answer Key**

**Page 6**
1. b. 2. c.
3. ice bombs, street, Spain
4. a. 5. c.
6. chemicals
7. huge, sudden, mysterious

**Page 8**
1. c. 2. b. 3. a.
4. Some people thought that it was too easy for subjects to cheat.
5. five
6. send
7. picture
8. b.

**Page 10**
1. d.
2. The Marfa lights are named for the town of Marfa, Texas.
10. lights from boats

**Page 12**
1. c. 2. d.
3. Woolpit
4. One
5. tunnel
6. English
7. d. 8. d.
9. Answers will vary.

**Page 14**
1. A yeti is a wild, furry man who lives in the mountains.

**Page 16**
1. c. 2. d. 3. c.
4. a. 5. a.
6. Answers will vary.

**Page 18**
1. a. 2. c. 3. b.
4. c. 5. a. 6. b.
7. Answers will vary.

**Page 20**
1. c. 2. e. 3. a. 4. b.
5. d. 6. d. 7. b.
8. missing link
9. Dan Gebo
10. ancestor
11. c.
12. Answers will vary.

**Page 22**
1. Huan
2. the black bear or the mountain lion
3. giant tortoise
4. Arizona
5. d. 6. c. 7. d.
8. Answers will vary but may include:
   a. One animal likes the scent of another animal.
   b. One animal is lonely or has lost a baby.
   c. One animal has to trust the other in order for it to survive.

**Page 24**
1. b. 2. a. 3. d.
4. c. 5. c.
6. Answers will vary.

**Page 26**
1. c. 2. c. 3. a.

**Page 28**
1. d. 2. b. 3. b. 4. c.
5. staff
6. eighth (or eight)
7. Answers will vary.

**Page 30**
1. b. 2. c. 3. c. 4. a.
5. Circle Makers
6. Answers will vary but may include:
   a. Crop circles might be made by people as works of art.
   b. Crop circles might be made by UFOs.
   c. Crop circles might be made by strange weather patterns.

**Page 31**
theories about Flores Man

**Page 32**
1. c. 2. d.
3. Flores Man is a race of tiny people that was discovered on the island of Flores in the Pacific Ocean.
4. tiny, hunter, mysterious

**Page 33**
5. c. 6. a. 7. c.
8. d. 9. c. 10. c.