

**SIXTH GRADE****Skill Builders**

Reading Comprehension

Grade**6****supports
NCTE
standards****Includes Critical Thinking Pages!****Reproducible****Clear Examples****Fun Format****Skills Include:**

- Comprehension
- Main Idea
- Sequencing
- Details
- Vocabulary
- Reasoning
- Logic

Skill Builders are great for keeping students current during the school year or preparing them for the grade ahead during the summer!

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Here's the Scoop!

Americans have been enjoying ice cream cones for over 100 years. The first ice cream cone was probably the creation of Italo Marchiony, an Italian immigrant in New York City. Marchiony owned a pushcart, which he used for selling lemon ice on the sidewalks of New York. His first cone was made of paper. He then created a cone made from pastry that could be eaten. It became so popular that he applied for a *patent* on his edible cone.

Although Marchiony is credited with the invention of the ice cream cone, a similar creation was developed independently in 1904 at the St. Louis World's Fair. People came to the fair from all over the world. A man named Charles Menches had a stand there, where he sold ice cream in dishes.

According to a version of the story, one day at the fair, Menches ran out of dishes. It was very warm, and he still had several hours of business ahead of him. Another vendor, Ernest Hamwi, was selling a treat called zalabia nearby. Zalabia is a crisp pastry sold with syrup. Menches asked if he could borrow some of the zalabia. He rolled one up and scooped ice cream on top. Menches's cone with ice cream became an instant hit, and the ice cream cone was born a second time.



Reading Comprehension

- Which of the following best defines the word *patent*?
 - a committee that rates the usefulness of new products
 - a loan used to start a business
 - a loose-leaf notebook used to record ideas
 - an exclusive right or license to make and sell a product
- According to one version of the story, what is the best explanation for the development of Menches's cone?
 - He was trying to help Ernest Hamwi sell zalabia.
 - He knew people would love ice cream in a cone.
 - He ran out of dishes.
 - He had sold lemon ice this way for years.
- Which of these statements is true?
 - Marchiony sold ice cream in St. Louis.
 - Hamwi sold ice cream in New York City.
 - Menches sold lemon ice on the streets of New York City.
 - Menches began using zalabia as a dish for ice cream.
- Which best identifies the time setting of this reading?
 - early 1800s
 - late 1800s
 - early twentieth century
 - late twentieth century
- Explain the main idea of this reading.

An Unlucky Day

Some people think that Friday the 13th is an unlucky day. They may avoid travel or refrain from engaging in important business on that day. The superstition surrounding Friday the 13th is probably the most widespread superstition in America. People affected with the fear of Friday the 13th suffer from *paraskavedekatriaphobia*.

Where did the connection between bad luck and Friday the 13th begin? First, the number 13 has long been considered unlucky. Some think it can be traced back to primitive humans. Since humans used only 10 fingers and two feet as counting units, they did not count any higher than 12. What was beyond 12 was a mystery and became a superstition. People began to avoid the number 13. For example, numbered floors in tall buildings often go from 12 to 14.

Another notion goes back to the Hindus. They considered it unlucky for 13 people to gather in one place. Thirteen was also an unlucky number in Norse mythology. Loki, one of the most evil of Norse gods, went uninvited to a party for 12 at Valhalla, a banquet hall of the gods. He caused the death of Balder, the god of light and joy.

Friday, the day of the week, has also been considered unlucky. In pagan Rome, Friday was execution day. In other early cultures, Friday was the Sabbath. Anyone engaging in other activities on that day would not be blessed by the gods.

Exactly how or why did Friday and the number 13 become connected to mark Friday the 13th as a day of bad luck? No one knows for sure.

Reading Comprehension

- Which of the following best defines *paraskavedekatriaphobia*?
 - fear of heights
 - fear of black cats
 - fear of launching ships
 - fear of Friday the 13th
- Who best explained why Friday the 13th is considered one of the unluckiest days of the year?
 - the ancient Greeks
 - no one
 - Hindus
 - ancient Romans
- Which of the following would not be considered superstitious?
 - walking around, not under, a ladder
 - concern about whether or not a black cat will cross one's path
 - being very cautious on Friday the 13th
 - walking home rather than taking the bus
- Which of the following statements is true?
 - Some people avoid traveling on Friday the 13th.
 - A black cat crossing one's path causes bad luck.
 - An apple a day really does keep the doctor away.
 - Ladders are no longer used by painters on Friday the 13th.
- Label one column "Good Luck Superstitions" and the other "Bad Luck Superstitions." Jot down all of the superstitions you can think of under each heading.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Rose Freedman

Do you have an escape route if your home or school catches fire? What if you didn't? What if you were in a burning building and all of the doors were locked so that you couldn't get out? On March 25, 1911, the Triangle Waist Company shirtwaist factory in New York City caught on fire. Many of the workers were trapped inside.

One of the women who managed to escape was Rose Freedman. After moving to the United States from Austria in 1909, she found a job attaching buttons to blouses at the Triangle factory.

The factory was not a very clean or safe place to work. A year after Rose got her job, the workers in the factory went on strike. They would not work until owners cleaned the workrooms and provided more safety precautions. The owners met only a few of the demands. But most of the workers could not afford to strike. They had to go back to work.

Then, tragedy struck when a fire started at the factory. One hundred forty-six people died that day. Many of the workers had no way out of the factory, because most of the exit doors leading to the stairways were locked. They had been locked to prevent workers from leaving for breaks or stealing fabric. For many workers, the only way out of the building was to jump 70 feet to the ground.

Rose Freedman was a survivor. She found some stairs and raced to the roof. When she looked down, she saw that the firefighters were trying to *douse* the blaze, but water from the hoses could not reach the fire on the top floors.

Rose saved her own life by keeping calm. She made it to the roof of another building and down 10 flights of stairs to safety. Later, she was offered a bribe to tell others that the exit doors to the stairways were open during the fire, but she refused. In part, because of the testimony of Rose Freedman, safety laws were created to prevent tragedies like this one. Many of these laws still exist today. Rose Freedman lived to the age of 107.

Reading Comprehension

1. Number the following events in the order that they happened.

_____ Rose got a job attaching buttons to blouses.

_____ The workers went on strike.

_____ New safety laws were created.

_____ Rose moved to New York.

_____ A fire broke out at the factory.

2. Why do you think Rose refused to lie about exit doors to the stairways being open?

A. The business owners didn't offer her enough money to lie.

B. She wanted to make the business owners happy.

C. Her friends told her not to lie.

D. She wanted to expose the factory's poor working conditions.

3. Which of the following best defines the word *douse*?

A. fan

B. light

C. put out

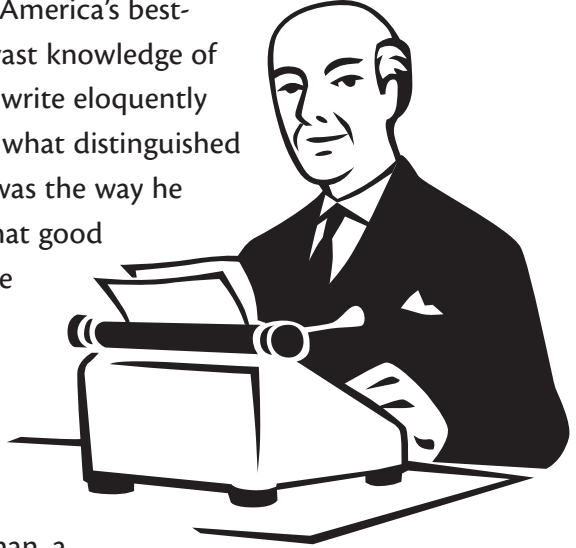
D. help

4. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?

5. Do you and your family have a fire escape plan in place for your home? On a separate sheet of paper, describe your plan or create one you would like your family to have.

Grantland Rice

Grantland Rice was one of America's best-loved sportswriters. He had a vast knowledge of many sports, and his ability to write eloquently about them was *uncanny*. But, what distinguished Rice from other sportswriters was the way he reported sports. He believed that good sportsmanship could lift people to morally greater heights. His philosophy of life became evident in his writing.



Rice was a columnist, a poet, and an author. He was also a film producer, a family man, a war veteran, and a skillful golfer. His personal accomplishments in over 50 years of sports writing were amazing. Through the eyes of Grantland Rice, good athletes became American heroes. He made household names of athletes like Jack Dempsey, Ty Cobb, Jim Thorpe, Red Grange, and Bill Tilden. He wrote about Gene Tunney, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Babe Ruth, Christy Mathewson, and the “Four Horsemen” of Notre Dame. Grantland Rice honed the craft of sportswriting.

Rice often used poetry in his columns. One example was “Game Called,” a poem he wrote on the date of Babe Ruth’s death. Rice’s most famous quotation came from his poem “Alumnus Football.” The last two lines of that poem are: “For when the One Great Scorer comes to mark against your name, He writes—not that you won or lost—but how you played the Game.”

His death in 1954 was mourned across the United States, but Grantland Rice has not been forgotten. Since 1954, the Grantland Rice Trophy has been awarded to the national champions in college football.

Reading Comprehension

1. What made Grantland Rice one of America's favorite sportswriters?
 - A. He had a vast knowledge of many sports.
 - B. His style was a blend of journalism and sports culture.
 - C. He made American heroes out of good athletes through his writing.
 - D. all of the above
2. Which of the following would have been most important to Grantland Rice on the field of play?
 - A. the final score
 - B. good sportsmanship
 - C. evenly matched teams
 - D. a close game
3. Which of the following best defines the word *uncanny*?
 - A. unfavorable
 - B. beyond the ordinary
 - C. recognizable
 - D. not very clever
4. Which best characterizes the time setting for the sportswriting career of Grantland Rice?

A. early 1800s	B. late 1800s
C. early 1900s	D. late 1900s
5. How do you think the final two lines of Rice's poem "Alumnus Football" reflect the way Rice felt about competitive sports in general?

Answer Key

Page 5, Here's the Scoop!

1. D.; 2. C.; 3. D.; 4. C.; 5. The ice cream cone was invented independently by different people. Marchiony's cone came from the sidewalks of New York City. Another cone was developed out of necessity at the St. Louis World's Fair.

Page 7, An Unlucky Day

1. D.; 2. B.; 3. D.; 4. A.; 5. Answers will vary. Good luck superstitions include: knocking on wood, eating an apple a day, finding a penny, and rain on a wedding day. Bad luck superstitions may include: walking under a ladder, breaking a mirror, and stepping on a sidewalk crack.

Page 9, Rose Freedman

1. 2, 3, 5, 1, 4; 2. D.; 3. C.; 4. Workers went on strike to protest unsafe working conditions but had to return to work.; 5. Answers will vary.

Page 11, Grantland Rice

1. D.; 2. B.; 3. B.; 4. C.; 5. Answers will vary. Rice felt that winning was not as important as demonstrating good sportsmanship and giving it your best effort.

Page 13, Mason and Dixon

1. C.; 2. C.; 3. A.; 4. A.; 5. Different English kings gave land grants to the Calvert and Penn families. The pieces of land had boundaries that did not match. Finally, Mason and Dixon surveyed the land to establish a new boundary line.

Page 15, The Biggest Rock

1. D.; 2. C.; 3. A.; 4. C.; 5. Diamonds are sometimes referred to as rocks because of their resemblance to the shapes of rocks before they are cut.

Page 17, Tea Overboard!

1. B.; 2. A.; 3. C.; 4. C.; 5. Parliament knew that tea was very important to the lives of the colonists. They chose tea because it would affect almost everyone. The company could not sell it in England and was on the verge of bankruptcy.

Page 19, Dynamic Duo

1. B.; 2. D.; 3. B.; 4. B.; 5. Answers will vary. They would no doubt be pleased with the progress that has been made but would point to areas still in need of improvement to achieve full equality for women.