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
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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: Amazing Kids* 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 height or weight, 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.
It would have been very easy for Wilma Rudolph to give up. She was a small and sickly child. She only weighed 4.5 pounds when she was born. In the first years of her life, Wilma’s mother helped her when she had the measles, the mumps, chicken pox, and scarlet fever because the family could not afford a doctor. Then, things became even more serious. Wilma got pneumonia, an illness that causes the lungs to fill with fluid. After beating pneumonia, Wilma’s parents saw that one of her legs was weak.

The Rudolph family was very poor. This time, they had to pay for a doctor. The news was not good. Wilma had polio. Polio is an illness that can cripple legs or arms. Today, there are shots that protect people from polio. But, Wilma was born in 1940 before the shots were created.

The doctor told Wilma’s parents that she would never walk. Wilma had a different idea. The doctor put braces on her legs. Wilma said that she was always trying to take them off. Wilma’s brothers and sisters watched her to make sure she kept the braces on. They helped rub her legs to make them better. Wilma also went to the hospital once a week. It was very hard work to make her legs strong. But, Wilma was brave. When she was 11 years old, Wilma took off her braces forever.

What did Wilma want to do after spending her whole life barely able to walk? She wanted to play sports! She started by playing basketball. Even after she joined a team, three years passed before her coach would let her play. Wilma did not give up. When her coach finally let her play, she set a state record. That was only the beginning! Wilma Rudolph went on to become a great track star. She won three gold medals in the 1960 Olympics. She was the first woman to do that. It was a long trip from her sickness-filled childhood to the Olympics. Wilma Rudolph made it because of her brave childhood.

Conversion

4.5 pounds = 2.04 kilograms
Answer the questions below.

1. Wilma Rudolph became—
   a. a famous track star.
   b. a famous baseball player.
   c. the first woman to fly.
   d. a famous politician.

2. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.
   The doctor put braces on her legs.
   Which of the following definitions of braces is used in this sentence?
   a. clasps that hold things together
   b. suspenders
   c. metal supports for the body
   d. plant firmly

3. Circle three adjectives that tell about Wilma Rudolph as a child.
   fast  poor  sickly
   healthy  angry  brave

4. Finish these sentences about Wilma Rudolph at the Olympics.
   Wilma Rudolph was the first
   _________________________________
to win
   three gold medals at the Olympics.
   She won her medals in the year
   _________________________________.

5. What is track?
   a. sporting events that feature passing a ball
   b. a game like hockey
   c. sporting events that feature running
   d. none of the above

6. Read the following sentences from the story and answer the question.
   The news was not good. Wilma had polio.
   What is polio?
   a. It is an illness that causes blindness.
   b. It is an illness that causes the lungs to fill with fluid.
   c. It is an illness that can cripple arms and legs.
   d. It is an illness that causes scarlet fever.
In Coalwood, West Virginia, many boys became miners when they grew up. That’s what Homer Hickam could have done, too. The mine owners owned the entire town of Coalwood. Mining was hard work. Sometimes, there was great danger. But, it was all that the town knew how to do. Homer’s own father wanted him to work for the mine. That was before the rockets.

In 1957, Homer was 14 years old. Russian scientists had put the first satellite, called Sputnik, into space. Homer watched it streak through the sky while standing with the other people of his town. That’s when Homer decided to build his own rocket. He and five friends built one together. It blew up the fence outside of Homer’s house!

Instead of giving up, Homer started to read. His teacher, Miss Riley, gave him a book. In order to understand it, Homer learned some hard math. He did it. Homer and his friends helped each other. They built 11 more rockets. All of them failed. People in town started calling them “The Rocket Boys.”

The Rocket Boys learned everything they could about math and science. They changed the way that they built the rockets. Then, they put everything that they learned into a science fair project. They won a national gold medal for their work.

By 1960, The Rocket Boys had built 31 rockets. The last one was over five feet tall. Almost everyone in the town came to watch the rocket go into the air. It was the last rocket that Homer built in Coalwood. But, the rockets had changed his life. He ended up working for the United States government at NASA instead of in the coal mine. His dreams took him to the stars.

Conversion

5 feet = 1.52 meters
To the Stars

Answer the questions below.

1. What did Homer Hickam decide to do when he was 14?
   a. He wanted to build a satellite.
   b. He decided to blow up a fence.
   c. He wanted to fly in Sputnik.
   d. none of the above

2. Read the following sentence from the story and answer the question.
   Homer watched it streak through the sky while standing with the other people of his town.
   What is another word for streak?
   a. stream
   b. stretch
   c. race
   d. wander

3. In order to build his rockets, Homer had to do all of the following EXCEPT—
   a. learn how to fly.
   b. learn more science.
   c. learn difficult math.
   d. get help from his friends.

4. What was Sputnik? Write your answer in complete sentences.

5. Homer and his friends won a gold medal at—
   a. NASA.
   b. a local science fair.
   c. Coalwood.
   d. a national science fair.

6. What is NASA?
   a. It is the part of the government that builds rockets and satellites.
   b. It is a company that owns and sails large ships.
   c. It is the part of the government that trains astronauts.
   d. a. and c.

7. How did the rockets change Homer’s life? Write your answer in complete sentences.
Anne Frank was only four years old when the nightmare started for her family. Her father decided that he had to move his family from Germany to Holland. They fled because they were Jews. The Nazis were taking power. Otto Frank knew that the Jews in Germany were in danger.

Anne liked her new life in Holland. She made new friends. She went to school. But then, World War II started. The Nazis took over Holland, and the nightmare started again. Otto Frank had to find a safe place to hide his family. He owned a building with offices and workrooms. He built a secret place behind a bookcase in one of the offices. The bookcase moved away from the wall. It was the door to the hiding place. The Frank family and another family moved there in 1942. Anne had just had a birthday. She took her present with her. It was a blank diary. While she was living in the hiding place, she wrote in her diary every day.

Two long years passed. The families lived in their secret place. They could not walk or move during the day. The workers below might hear them. They could only talk, cook, and walk at night. They never went outside. They were very careful. But, the Nazis still found them. They were arrested in 1944. They were taken to a prison camp. Only Otto Frank lived to see the end of the war.

Something else survived, too. Anne’s diary was still behind the bookcase in the secret rooms. It told the story of their life in hiding. Even though she was only 13 years old when she started it, Anne’s diary showed that she was a fine writer. All of the things she hoped for and feared were written down. Her father thought other people should read Anne’s diary. The book was printed and released in 1949. This moving story about the lives of two Jewish families during World War II is still read today. In it, Anne’s amazing spirit is still alive.
Behind the Bookcase

Answer the questions below.

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

This moving story about the lives of two Jewish families during World War II is still read today.

Which of the following definitions of the word moving is used in the sentence?
   a. traveling from one place to another
   b. carrying furniture to a new place
   c. a kind of ticket for a car accident
   d. deeply touching

2. Why did Anne and her family have to go into hiding? Write your answer in a complete sentence.

____________________________________
____________________________________

3. Which of these is NOT a feature of the Frank family’s hiding place?
   a. had a door so that they could go outside at night
   b. had a doorway hidden behind a bookcase
   c. housed two families
   d. was in an office building

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

4. _______ Anne was two years old when her family left Germany.

5. _______ The Nazis took over Holland after World War II started.

6. _______ Anne wrote about their hiding place on a computer.

7. _______ Two families hid in the secret rooms in the office building.

8. _______ Otto Frank had Anne’s diary published after the war ended.

9. Choose the number that BEST completes this sentence:

Anne was _____ years old when her family was arrested.
   a. 4
   b. 12
   c. 13
   d. 15

10. During the day, the people in the hiding place could not ___________ because ___________________________ ____________________________.
Answer Key

Page 6
1.  a.  
2.  c.  
3.  poor, sickly, brave  
4.  woman, 1960  
5.  c.  

Page 8
1.  d.  
2.  c.  
3.  a.  
4.  Sputnik was a Russian satellite. It was the first satellite in space.  
5.  d.  
6.  d.  
7.  Answers will vary but may include: Instead of working in a coal mine, Homer grew up to work for NASA.  

Page 10
1.  d.  
2.  Answers will vary but may include: Anne and her family had to hide from the Nazis because they were Jews.  
3.  a.  
4.  F  
5.  T  
6.  F  
7.  T  
8.  F  
9.  d.  
10.  move around or make noise, the workers below might hear them  

Page 14
1.  If someone is solving a calendar problem, she is given a specific date, including the year, and asked to find the day of the week for that date.  
2.  b.  
3.  F  
4.  T  
5.  T  
6.  F  
7.  T  
8.  b.  
9.  d.  
10.  She thinks that people need to exercise their brains.  

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

Page 18
1.  c.  
2.  b.  
3.  a.  
4.  12 years old  
5.  c.  
6.  b.  
7.  Answers will vary.  

Page 20
1.  d.  
2.  a.  
3.  e.  
4.  b.  
5.  c.  
6.  c.  
7.  a.  do  
8.  b.  was not  
9.  c.  35  
10.  d.  
9.  a.  violin  
10.  Answers will vary.  

Page 22
1.  Gravity  
2.  Christmas Day, 1642  
3.  learner  
4.  kites  
5.  grandmother  
6.  T  
7.  F  
8.  F  
9.  T  
10.  b.  
11.  Answers will vary.  

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

Page 26
1.  c.  
2.  b.  
3.  d.  
4.  d.  
5.  T  
6.  T  
7.  T  
8.  F  
9.  Answers will vary.  

Page 28
1.  a.  
2.  d.  
3.  c.  
4.  b.  
5.  12  
6.  Rolfe  
7.  Answers will vary but may include:  
8.  a.  She carried messages from her father to Jamestown.  
9.  b.  She asked her father to give the settlers food.  
10.  c.  Her marriage helped bring peace between the tribe and the settlers.  

Page 30
1.  c.  
2.  a.  
3.  c.  
4.  Answers will vary but may include:  
5.  Answers will vary but may include: It would have been easy for Mattie to have given up because he knew he was going to die soon.  
6.  a.  
7.  Answers will vary.  

Page 31
Stephen’s next movie