

Contents

Using This Book	4
Comprehension Skills At-a-Glance	4
Meeting the Common Core State Standards	6

PASSAGES

1. About Hippos	7	22. Snowflakes	28
2. Olympic Jobs	8	23. Watch the Weather	29
3. A Look at Leopards	9	24. Chippy the Chimp	30
4. Chinese New Year	10	25. Finding Food	31
5. Pets in Paris	11	26. Earthquakes and Buildings	32
6. Wigs and Gowns	12	27. Off-Duty and On-Duty	33
7. Freecycling	13	28. Shoe Story	34
8. Madame C. J. Walker	14	29. Festival of Lights	35
9. From Gaggle to Gang	15	30. Civil War Game	36
10. Spinning Spiders	16	31. Desert Cat	37
11. Meet the Sloth	17	32. Fence of Colors	38
12. Learning About Tornadoes	18	33. Presidential Nicknames	39
13. Tale From the Deep	19	34. Buddy and Frank	40
14. Comic Strip Letters	20	35. Choosing Leaders	41
15. Rodents on the Prairie	21	36. Tail Tales	42
16. The Silk Route	22	37. Stop and Go	43
17. Happy Birthday	23	38. Mighty Mountains	44
18. Talking About Turtles	24	39. Word Pairs	45
19. Blobs on the Beach	25	40. Short Forms	46
20. Meriwether Lewis	26		
21. Wake-Up Call	27	Answers	47

Using This Book

Reading comprehension in nonfiction involves numerous thinking skills. Students require these skills to make sense of a text and become successful readers. This book offers practice in key skills needed to meet the Common Core State Standards in Reading/Language Arts for grade four. (See page 6 for more.) Each student page includes a short passage focusing on four of these essential comprehension skills.

Comprehension Skills At-a-Glance

Use the information that follows to introduce the reading comprehension skills covered in this book.

Main Idea & Details

Understanding the main or key idea of a paragraph is crucial for a reader. The main idea is what the paragraph is about. The other parts of the paragraph help to explain more about this key idea. The main idea is sometimes in the first or last sentence of a paragraph. Students should be aware that some main ideas are stated explicitly and others are implicit requiring readers to put together details to determine the main idea.

The information that supports the main idea is usually referred to as the details. Details—facts, examples, definitions, etc.—help a reader gain a fuller understanding of a paragraph.

Summarize

Readers should be able to use main ideas to summarize a text. By summarizing, students are better able to recall important points. This is an important skill for taking notes and studying for exams.

Context Clues

Using context clues means determining an unfamiliar word's meaning by studying the phrases, sentences, and overall text with which the word appears. Context clues help readers comprehend and enjoy a text and also read more smoothly and efficiently.


Passage 17

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Happy Birthday

You turn a year older, and friends sing a certain song to you. The story of "Happy Birthday" goes back to the 1800s. In 1859 a teacher named Patty Hill and her sister Mildred published a book called *Song Stories for Kindergarten*. The first song in the book was a four-line verse called "Good Morning to All." Patty soon wrote new words to this story, and it became the popular "Happy Birthday" song still sung today. People sing it in many languages around the world.



- The main idea of this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. celebrating birthdays.
 - ☐ B. the story of "Happy Birthday."
 - ☐ C. kindergarten songs.
 - ☐ D. a worldwide song.
- A supporting detail is
 - ☐ A. Mildred Hill was a church organist.
 - ☐ B. kindergartners like to sing.
 - ☐ C. Patty Hill wrote the words.
 - ☐ D. people in Nepal sing the song.
- From this paragraph, you can conclude that
 - ☐ A. the birthday song is long.
 - ☐ B. kindergartners are good singers.
 - ☐ C. people celebrate by singing on birthdays.
 - ☐ D. Patty Smith Hill knew many languages.
- The title that best summarizes this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. Songs for Kindergarten.
 - ☐ B. How the Birthday Song Originated.
 - ☐ C. The Songs of Patty Smith Hill.
 - ☐ D. An 1893 Songbook.

1. Main Idea 2. Details 3. Draw Conclusions 4. Summarize

In this paragraph, students have to read the entire text and ask themselves "What is this paragraph mainly about?" The main idea is supported by different facts (details) about the story of the "Happy Birthday" song.


Passage 11

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Meet the Sloth

The sloth is a fascinating animal that lives in the trees of tropical forests in Central America. It spends much of its time hanging upside down from branches. A sloth moves very slowly, feeding on leaves and fruit as it goes. During the rainy season, a sloth has a greenish _____ . Tiny plants called green algae live in the sloth's fur where they capture moisture from the rain. The algae provide **camouflage** for the sloth in the green treetops. Being able to blend in is very helpful because a sloth could never move quickly enough to escape its enemies.



- The best word for the blank in this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. experience.
 - ☐ B. tinge.
 - ☐ C. offspring.
 - ☐ D. nutrition.
- In this paragraph, the word **camouflage** must mean
 - ☐ A. concealment.
 - ☐ B. transportation.
 - ☐ C. flesh-eating.
 - ☐ D. entertainment.
- The main idea of this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. what a sloth is like.
 - ☐ B. how camouflage helps a sloth.
 - ☐ C. where you can find a sloth.
 - ☐ D. sloths and the rainy season.
- Which word in the paragraph is a clue to how the writer feels about sloths?
 - ☐ A. greenish
 - ☐ B. tropical
 - ☐ C. fascinating

1. Context Clues 2. Context Clues 3. Main Idea 4. Point of View

Several clues in the paragraph (*greenish tinge, green treetops, blend in*) help a reader determine the meaning of *camouflage*.

Figurative Language

Beyond using context clues to derive meaning is the ability to differentiate between literal and figurative language. Readers who can recognize figures of speech and determine their meanings are well on their way to fluency.

Inference

Although some students don't know what an inference is, many are most likely making inferences—both in their daily lives and when reading—without being aware of it. Students should understand that writers don't include every detail in their work; it is up to readers to supply some information. A reader makes a guess or inference by putting together what is in a text with what he or she already knows. Inferring makes a significant difference in how much a reader gains from a text.

Draw Conclusions

After thinking about information in a text, a reader makes a decision or conclusion by examining evidence rooted in the text. Students should know that writers don't always state all of their ideas, so readers have to look for clues to understand what is meant.

Fact & Opinion

Readers who can identify and differentiate between statements of fact and opinion are better able to analyze and assess a text. Students should learn to recognize phrases, such as *I think*, *you should*, and *it's the best/most*, that signal opinions.

Point of View

While distinguishing fact from opinion is one step in the reading process, it is important for students to go further. They should be able to sort facts, opinions, and feelings to help determine a writer's point of view and compare it to what they themselves think. Students should learn that good readers consult several sources on subjects of interest to gain different points of view.

Tips

★ Tell students to first read the passage and then answer the questions. Show them how to fill in the circles for bubble-test questions.

★ The comprehension skills targeted in the questions accompanying each passage are labeled at the bottom of the page.

★ Review the completed pages with students on a regular basis. Encourage them to explain their thinking for each correct answer.

Passage 23


Name _____

Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Watch the Weather

The organizers of the Olympics face many problems. One of the biggest is often the weather. In the years 1932, 1956, and 1964, a lack of snow made things difficult at the Winter Olympics. Scorching temperatures during some Summer Olympics have also caused problems. In 1924, only half of the runners in a cross-country event made it to the finish line because of the heat. Other weather-related problems have created headaches, too. In 1906 in Greece, the rowing races had to be cancelled because the sea was too rough. A flood once almost halted the Olympics in Paris.



- Fill in the correct circle to show whether each statement is a fact or an inference.

Fact	Inference
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- The main idea of this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. rough seas at the Olympics.
 - ☐ B. Winter Olympics' lack of snow.
 - ☐ C. too much heat at the Olympics
 - ☐ D. weather problems at the Olympics.
- The underlined words in this paragraph are an example of figurative language called
 - ☐ A. metaphor.
 - ☐ B. personification.
 - ☐ C. simile.
 - ☐ D. hyperbole.
- Which phrase best reflects the writer's point of view?
 - ☐ A. impatient with weather problems
 - ☐ B. understanding of weather problems
 - ☐ C. outraged about weather problems
 - ☐ D. indifferent to weather problems

1. Inference 2. Main Idea 3. Figurative Language 4. Point of View

The writer never says that Olympic organizers have to be good problem solvers, but facts in the paragraph plus what readers know about organizing events can be used to make an inference.

Passage 14


Name _____

Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Comic Strip Letters

Have you ever noticed that the print in comic strips is in capital letters? I find this really annoying. One reason given is that comic strips are reduced when printed in newspapers. When print is reduced, small letters tend to blob up more than big ones. Another reason is that by using letters that are the same height, an artist can fit them in the space more easily. I think that artists probably find using lowercase letters too much of a challenge. Maybe they don't know which words to capitalize!



- Write fact or opinion next to each sentence.
 - _____ A. Have you ever noticed that the print in comic strips is in capital letters?
 - _____ B. When print is reduced, small letters tend to blob up more than big ones.
 - _____ C. Maybe they don't know which words to capitalize!
- The main idea of the paragraph is
 - ☐ A. the problems with small letters.
 - ☐ B. how artists use lowercase letters.
 - ☐ C. why capitalizing is important.
 - ☐ D. why capital letters are used in comics.
- Which phrase best reflects the writer's point of view?
 - ☐ A. enthusiastic about capital letters in comics
 - ☐ B. indifferent to capital letters in comics
 - ☐ C. disapproving of capital letters in comics
- From this paragraph, you can conclude that in comic strips
 - ☐ A. lowercase letters are easier to read.
 - ☐ B. reduced print is easier to read.
 - ☐ C. capital letters are easier to read.
 - ☐ D. letters of different heights look best.

1. Fact & Opinion 2. Main Idea 3. Point of View 4. Draw Conclusions

To appreciate this text, the reader should understand that the writer has inserted commentary or opinion into the paragraph. For example, the sentence, *Maybe they don't know which words to capitalize!*, is the author's opinion

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

About Hippos

The hippopotamus spends a lot of time in water. In fact, the name of this amazing African animal means “river horse.” During a hot day, a hippo will spend hours in rivers and lakes. Only its eyes, ears, and nostrils can be seen above the water. This helps to keep the hairless animal from getting sunburned. Although it eats water plants, the hippo goes ashore at night to find larger plants. If it is the dry season and the water is low, a hippo rolls in mud to cover its huge body. This way its skin doesn’t dry out



1. The main idea of this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. a hippopotamus is a water horse.
 - ☐ B. this animal is a plant-eater.
 - ☐ C. hippos live only in Africa.
 - ☐ D. a hippo spends a lot of time in water.
2. A supporting detail is
 - ☐ A. sometimes hippos overturn boats.
 - ☐ B. sunburn is a problem for many animals.
 - ☐ C. a hippo likes to roll in mud.
 - ☐ D. water protects a hippo’s skin from the sun.
3. Which word in the passage is a clue to how the writer feels about hippos?
 - ☐ A. huge ☐ B. hairless ☐ C. amazing
4. From this paragraph, you can conclude that hippos
 - ☐ A. like to hide. ☐ B. have sensitive skin.
 - ☐ C. are lazy. ☐ D. are night creatures.

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Olympic Jobs

Everyone knows that thousands of athletes compete in the Olympic Games and that hundreds of thousands of visitors attend. But did you know that about 60,000 more people work to make the Olympics run smoothly? That's pretty impressive! Some of these workers are paid, but thousands of others are **volunteers**. All of them have to be trained for their job. These workers do everything from sweeping up litter to escorting competitors to selling tickets to announcing winners.



1. A title that best summarizes this paragraph is
 - ☐ A. How Athletes Compete at the Games.
 - ☐ B. Tips for Visitors to the Olympics.
 - ☐ C. Working as a Ticket Seller.
 - ☐ D. Workers Behind the Olympics.
2. In this paragraph, the word **volunteers** means
 - ☐ A. litter sweepers.
 - ☐ B. unpaid workers.
 - ☐ C. competitors.
 - ☐ D. athletic winners.
3. From this paragraph, you can conclude that
 - ☐ A. the Olympics are a lot of fun.
 - ☐ B. Olympic workers are paid well.
 - ☐ C. running the Olympics is a big job.
 - ☐ D. most Olympic visitors help out.
4. Reread the paragraph. Write a sentence that is an opinion from the paragraph.

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

A Look at Leopards

Leopards hunt for their food at night. These animals are carnivores and eat only meat. Their excellent eyesight helps them stalk and capture their prey even in the dark. In many cases, a leopard will carry its prey long distances away from the place of the kill. Because it is a good climber, a leopard will often drag its dinner into a tree where other animals cannot reach it.

There, the leopard can devour its meal alone.

Unlike lions, leopards are solitary and **antisocial** animals.



1. In this paragraph, the word **antisocial** must mean

☐ A. friendly and likable.

☐ B. extremely hungry.

☐ C. enjoying groups.

☐ D. not sociable.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is

☐ A. how leopards differ from lions.
 ☐ B. what leopards do during the day.
 ☐ C. what leopards eat for dinner.
 ☐ D. how leopards hunt and eat.
3. Fill in the correct circle to show whether each statement is a fact or an inference.

Fact Inference

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | A. Leopards do not eat plants. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | B. Leopards can see very well. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | C. Leopard don't share their food. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | D. Leopards are good climbers. |

4. Which phrase best reflects the writer's point of view?

☐ A. respectful of leopards
 ☐ B. fearful of leopards
 ☐ C. amused by leopards

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year lasts for 15 days and is observed by Chinese communities the world over. During this time, many special traditions are followed. One is the popular Dragon Dance, when people in a dragon costume twist and **prance** through the streets. On the last day of the New Year Celebration, when the full moon rises, the Chinese celebrate the Lantern Festival. Thousands of paper and silk lanterns twinkle in the dark like magic stars. This happy night embraces the New Year.



1. The underlined words in this paragraph are an example of figurative language called

☐ A. metaphor.
☐ B. personification.
☐ C. simile.
☐ D. hyperbole.

2. Find and write another example of figurative language in the paragraph.

3. Which word in the paragraph is a clue to how the writer feels about Chinese New Year?

☐ A. last
☐ B. special
☐ C. full

4. In this paragraph, the word **prance** means

☐ A. practice hard.
☐ B. dance playfully.
☐ C. play tricks.
☐ D. walk carefully.

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Pets in Paris

France has long been known as a country where people are devoted to their dogs. At some Paris hotels, this is no exception. They offer many services just for the canine set. For example, there are trained dog groomers, charming dog toiletries, and even custom-made beds for **pampered** pets. These hotels also provide round-the-clock room service for dogs, with a choice of healthy meals. Of course, dogs are welcome in the hotel restaurants, too. They can't get in without their owners, though!



1. Which phrase best reflects the writer's point of view?

- ☐ A. approving of the dog treatment
- ☐ B. upset with the hotels
- ☐ C. outraged about so much attention being given to dogs

2. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

- _____ A. They offer many services just for the canine set.
- _____ B. These hotels also provide round-the-clock service for dogs.
- _____ C. For example, there are charming dog toiletries.

3. From this paragraph, you can conclude that

- ☐ A. only Paris hotels have dog services.
- ☐ B. dog services are big business in Paris.
- ☐ C. people aren't important to Paris hotels.
- ☐ D. cats are unpopular in Paris.

4. In this paragraph, the word **pampered** means

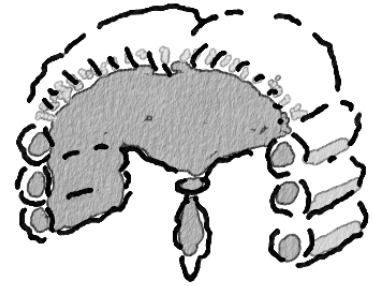
- ☐ A. wearing diapers.
- ☐ B. travel weary.
- ☐ C. coddled.
- ☐ D. difficult.

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Wigs and Gowns

In Britain, judges and lawyers have traditionally worn wigs and gowns in court. Depending on their role, some also wear lace neck trimmings, sashes, hoods, fur mantles, and buckled shoes. From time to time, this judicial finery has been mocked. After all, it is ridiculous. The curly wigs are made in four shades of off-white, ranging from light gray to beige. The more important the official, the fancier the wig. A senior judge wears a headpiece of curls that reaches to the shoulders. What a silly, fusty, dusty custom!



1. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

_____ A. In Britain, judges and lawyers have traditionally worn wigs and gowns in court.

_____ B. From time to time, this judicial finery has been mocked.

_____ C. What a silly, fusty, dusty custom!

2. Which word in the paragraph is a clue to how the writer feels about court dress in Britain?

- ☐ A. ridiculous
- ☐ B. important
- ☐ C. beige

3. Which sentence is most likely true?

- ☐ A. Tradition is important in British courts.
- ☐ B. Judges wear wigs because they're bald.
- ☐ C. The curly wigs often fall off in court.
- ☐ D. Officials don't want to wear fancy wigs.

4. A title that best summarizes this paragraph is

- ☐ A. Curly Headpieces in Britain.
- ☐ B. Traditional Court Dress in Britain.
- ☐ C. Light Gray to Beige.
- ☐ D. Laughing at Judicial Finery.

Name _____ Date _____

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

Freecycling

You've heard of recycling, but do you know about freecycling? When you freecycle, you give away things you no longer want or need. Freecyclers can also acquire things that someone else is getting rid of. Lists of things available for freecycling and lists of things wanted by freecyclers are posted on Web sites. People who sign up and find just what they want then arrange to pick up the items. Some popular items for freecyclers are bicycles, exercise equipment, furniture, and computer parts.



1. Fill in the correct circle to show whether each statement is a fact or an inference.

Fact Inference

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | A. Freecycling is handy if you are cleaning a garage. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | B. You could furnish a room from freecycled things. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | C. Computer parts are favorite recycled items. |
| <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | D. It's easiest to freecycle with people who are nearby. |

2. Write *yes* or *no* under each heading on the chart to show if the word describes freecycling.

Costly	Dishonest	Useful

3. The main idea of this paragraph is

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> A. how to get free things. | <input type="radio"/> B. how to get a used computer. |
| <input type="radio"/> C. extending the life of different items. | <input type="radio"/> D. getting rid of exercise equipment. |

4. Which phrase best reflects the writer's point of view?

- ☐ A. unimpressed with freecycling
- ☐ B. worried about freecycling
- ☐ C. accepting of freecycling