

# Walk the Plank!

by W.M. Akers



Walking the plank is not a fun thing to do. Here's how it works. A pirate sticks a long piece of wood off the side of his ship and makes you stand at one end. He puts his sword at your back and bellows, "Walllllk the plank!" You walk across the plank toward the water. When you run out of plank, you fall in the water. Probably there are sharks down there. The ship sails away, and that's the end of you.

The thing is, pirates never really made anyone walk the plank. This may surprise you, since it's in a lot of movies and TV shows. It's a nasty thing to do, and pirates were pretty nasty, so it *seems* like something they would do. But in fact walking the plank was imagined by Robert Louis Stevenson, a 19th-century novelist, whose most famous book is *Treasure Island*. A fictional pirate like Long John Silver might make you walk the plank, but a real-life pirate never would.

That is what was going through Tommy's mind as he stood on the end of the plank staring out at his doom. His best friend Jack stood behind him. Tommy felt the point of Jack's wooden sword digging into his back.

"I said, walllllk the plank!" shouted Jack.

"The thing is," said Tommy, "pirates never really made people walk the plank. That was invented by Robert Louis Stevenson, who-"

"I'm a pirate! Do you think I care about books?"

They were standing on the edge of Jack's tree house, which had a lot of uses. Sometimes it was a submarine. Sometimes it was a spaceship. Sometimes it was just a tree house. That afternoon, it was serving as a pirate ship. They had been pirates all afternoon, and everything

was going fine until Tommy made the mistake of criticizing his captain. Jack was always the captain, since this was his tree house. And Captain Jack's number one rule was that the crew must never question his orders.

So when the Captain ordered his first mate to hand over three chocolate chip cookies, Tommy was supposed to do so without complaint. But chocolate chip cookies were his favorite. He'd suffered through a whole boring bologna sandwich to get to them, and now that he was finished, Jack wanted to take them away. Tommy didn't care who was the captain. He stuffed all three cookies into his mouth and chewed as fast as he could. And so Captain Jack sentenced him to walk the plank.

"I'm getting tired of waiting, Mister Tommy. Walllllk the plank!"

Tommy looked at the ground. They had jumped out of the tree house tons of times, but it was easy when you had a running start. It would be harder to just walk into thin air. He could see why Robert Louis Stevenson thought this would be a scary thing. There was no way out. Unless...what would a pirate do?

Tommy didn't hesitate. He spun around as fast as he could and kicked his leg into the air. Jack's sword went flying, and before Jack knew what had happened, Tommy leapt onto the sword. He popped up and pointed it at Jack's back.

"Yaaargh!"

"What are you doing?" whined Jack.

"This is a mutiny! I'm the captain now. And I say that you have to walllllk the plank!"

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What were Jack and Tommy pretending the tree house was?

- A. a submarine
- B. an island
- C. a spaceship
- D. a pirate ship

2. What is the main conflict in this story?

- A. Jack wants Tommy to walk the plank, but Tommy does not want to.
- B. Jack wants to eat all the cookies, but Tommy wants to share them.
- C. Tommy wants to stop pretending to be pirates, but Jack does not want to.
- D. Tommy wants Jack to let him be Captain, but Jack does not want to.

3. Read these sentences from the text.

So when the Captain ordered his first mate to hand over three chocolate chip cookies, Tommy was supposed to do so without complaint. But chocolate chip cookies were his favorite. He'd suffered through a whole boring bologna sandwich to get to them, and now that he was finished, Jack wanted to take them away. Tommy didn't care who was the captain. He stuffed all three cookies into his mouth and chewed as fast as he could.

Based on this evidence, what conclusion can you draw about how Tommy felt?

- A. Tommy felt a little sad, but thought Captain Jack was being fair.
- B. Tommy felt annoyed and thought Captain Jack's order was unfair.
- C. Tommy felt calm, but thought Captain Jack's order was unfair.
- D. Tommy felt neutral and did not mind that Captain Jack wanted the cookies.

4. Tommy is afraid to walk the plank. What evidence from the text best supports this conclusion?

- A. "You walk across the plank toward the water. When you run out of plank, you fall in the water."
- B. "Tommy didn't hesitate. He spun around as fast as he could and kicked his leg into the air."
- C. "[Tommy] could see why Robert Louis Stevenson thought [walking the plank] would be a scary thing."
- D. "A fictional pirate like Long John Silver might make you walk the plank, but a real-life pirate never would."

5. What is the main idea of this story?

- A. While playing pirates, Jack orders Tommy to give him three chocolate chip cookies.
- B. While pretending they are pirates, Jack orders Tommy to walk the plank, but Tommy finds a way out.
- C. Jack and Tommy enjoy playing pretend in Jack's tree house.
- D. Although walking the plank is common in movies and TV shows, real pirates would not make someone walk the plank.

6. Read these sentences from the text.

So when the Captain ordered his first mate to hand over three chocolate chip cookies, Tommy was supposed to do so without complaint. But chocolate chip cookies were his favorite. He'd suffered through a whole boring bologna sandwich to get to them, and now that he was finished, Jack wanted to take them away. Tommy didn't care who was the captain. He stuffed all three cookies into his mouth and chewed as fast as he could. And so Captain Jack sentenced him to walk the plank.

'I'm getting tired of waiting, Mister Tommy. Walk the plank!'

As used in this context, what does the word "sentence" mean?

- A. a complete unit in language
- B. to order a punishment
- C. a kind suggestion
- D. to help or assist

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Jack was always the captain \_\_\_\_\_ this was his tree house.

- A. however
- B. because
- C. therefore
- D. although

**8.** What did Tommy do that caused Captain Jack to sentence him to walk the plank?

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**9.** How does Tommy avoid walking the plank?

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**10.** Explain why Tommy decides to become the captain and order Jack to walk the plank. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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# Studying Coral Reefs Helps the Land, Too

Text and image provided courtesy of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

*a coral reef in Hawaii*

Have you ever seen the ocean? Standing on a beach watching waves rise and crash onto the sand is an amazing sight. But the real action is happening underwater. Scientists who study the life in the ocean are called marine biologists. Marine biologists also study major changes in the ocean and how those changes affect ocean life. For instance, climate change is making oceans warmer. It is also changing the water in other ways. One big concern is its damaging effects on coral reefs. Some marine biologists work as coral reef conservationists to find ways to reverse these effects.

Coral reefs are underwater structures in the ocean near the coasts. They are made up of tiny ocean animals called corals. The corals grow side by side in groups, so that all together they look like plants or piles of rocks. Corals and tiny organisms called algae have a symbiotic relationship. This means they need each other to live. Corals provide a safe home for the algae, and algae help corals get enough food. Algae also give corals their bright colors.

Coral reefs are located near many countries all over the world. These reefs are very important to ocean life and to the coastal communities. Thousands of ocean animals depend on coral reefs for shelter and food. Coral reefs also protect the land. They absorb some of the

energy from big storms that threaten the coasts. By the time the big storms reach land, they are not as strong. This helps prevent flooding.

Climate change and pollution are hurting coral reefs. When the water gets too dirty or too warm, corals lose their algae and turn white. This is called coral bleaching. Coral bleaching is happening all over the world. When corals bleach, they often die. When the corals die, it hurts all those other animals that depend on them for their homes and food. Coral bleaching also puts the communities along the coast at greater risk of being damaged by storms.

Coral reef conservationists and other scientists are working to find ways to help corals survive. To do this, they are trying to understand why some corals bleach and others don't. They are also studying ways to help make coral reefs bigger and stronger. They are growing coral in laboratories. Then they transplant them near reefs to find out if they'll grow in that area.

Amy Baco-Taylor is a marine biologist who is studying corals. She first learned about marine biology from reading stories and watching videos about the ocean. She saw the ocean in person for the first time when she was 13. Now, she goes on expeditions to study deep-sea corals. She is helping to better understand rare corals and the best way to help them survive in a changing ocean.

Curt Storlazzi is a scientist with the United States Geological Survey. He studies other ways to help coral. He calls healthy coral reefs a natural infrastructure, or foundation. On land, infrastructure refers to roads, bridges, and buildings, plus water and electricity. Coral reefs are like the infrastructure of the ocean.

If spending time underwater learning about marine life sounds amazing to you, think about becoming a coral reef conservationist. Helping to save these important animals will help the ocean and the land.

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These conservation efforts are supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), which specializes in bringing together individuals, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and corporations to restore our nation's fish, wildlife, plants, and habitats for current and future generations.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What do marine biologists study?

- A. plants on land
- B. life in the ocean
- C. reptiles on land and in water
- D. plants in forests

2. What effect is climate change having on coral reefs?

- A. It is harming coral reefs.
- B. It is helping coral reefs.
- C. It is only hurting some coral reefs.
- D. It is making coral reefs bigger.

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

“Coral reefs also protect the land. They absorb some of the energy from big storms that threaten the coasts. By the time the big storms reach land, they are not as strong. This helps prevent flooding...

When the water gets too dirty or too warm, corals lose their algae and turn white. This is called coral bleaching. Coral bleaching is happening all over the world. When corals bleach, they often die.”

What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. Warmer ocean water could mean less flooding for people living on coastlines.
- B. Dirtier water doesn't change coral reefs, but warmer water can be harmful to them.
- C. Warmer ocean water could mean more flooding for people living on coastlines.
- D. Warmer and dirtier ocean water doesn't have an effect on coral reefs.

4. What words would the author probably use to describe coral reef conservationists?

- A. as people doing important work for the oceans
- B. as people who aren't sure what they're doing
- C. as people who want to create a different way of creating electricity
- D. as people who refuse to eat fish or other sea animals

**5.** What is the main idea of this text?

- A. There are places to see coral reefs all over the world since they grow in many different places, but many of them are undergoing coral bleaching.
- B. Coral reefs are important to people living along coastlines because they absorb some of the energy from big storms that hit land.
- C. Amy Baco-Taylor is a marine biologist who studies coral to better understand rare corals and help them survive.
- D. Coral reefs are important to ocean life and coastal communities, so conservationists are trying to protect them from climate change.

# Talking Leaves

by ReadWorks

R D W H G O P  
L N Y B P M  
S T U V B A A  
C H T A J Y F F  
C O U T Z O C  
R H S V F L E O  
T O B O S J K V  
A O G G V J S  
S G I O T L S O P  
P H C O C J L  
L O S O I E

You are reading these words right now because of a written system of communication. However, not all languages have written forms! In the year 1809, a man named Sequoyah lived in such a world. Sequoyah was a member of a Native American tribe, the Cherokee. The Cherokee people speak their own language, but for hundreds of years they did not have a system of writing. The Cherokee have a strong oral history tradition. However, having no written system did cause some problems. Cherokee business owners could not keep written records. Cherokee soldiers fighting far from home could not write letters to their families. And the Cherokee couldn't spread information through newspapers or books.

Sequoyah was probably born around the year 1770, though no one knows for sure. He lived with his mother in a small village in the mountains of Tennessee. He did not go to school. Instead, he helped his mother work in the garden and tend cattle.

Sequoyah was a smart, quick learner. As an adult, Sequoyah taught himself how to make jewelry out of silver. He also became a blacksmith, using heat to shape metal into arrow points, knives, and shovels. He sold the things he made and became a well-known businessman in his town.

People came from all over to buy the beautiful objects Sequoyah made. Sometimes, English-speaking people came to his shop. Sequoyah noticed that these people had a special way of communicating with one another: they used marks on paper to record their thoughts and ideas. Sequoyah called these pieces of paper "talking leaves." He began to wonder why people who spoke Cherokee did not have a way to write down their words.

In 1809, Sequoyah decided he would invent a way to write the Cherokee language. His friends and family thought he was crazy. They said that it could not be done. They said it was a waste of time. Many people believed the Cherokee language did not need to be written down. The Cherokee tribe had grown strong and powerful without the use of writing-why did they need it now? But Sequoyah did not listen. He was determined to give the Cherokee their own "talking leaves."

Sequoyah set out to create a new writing system for the Cherokee language. At first Sequoyah tried to create a different symbol for every word in the Cherokee language-and there are thousands of words! He soon realized it would be very hard for people to remember so many symbols. Sequoyah came up with a new idea: he would make a picture to represent each syllable. After much hard work, Sequoyah created 85 symbols, one for each syllable in the Cherokee language. His work was complete.

Now that Sequoyah had invented a way to write the Cherokee language, he needed to see if it worked. He helped his daughter Ayoka learn each symbol. Together they practiced saying words to each other and writing them down. Even though she was only six years old, Ayoka learned to read and write very quickly. Sequoyah's invention was a success!

Sequoyah was excited to teach other Cherokee people how to read and write. He traveled from town to town offering to teach anyone who was interested. Sequoyah was disappointed to find that almost nobody wanted to learn to read or write. He had to come up with a new plan.

Sequoyah brought Ayoka with him to a nearby village and met with the local leaders. He told Ayoka to leave the room, then asked each person to say one word. He wrote all their words down and called Ayoka back into the room. When she read each word perfectly, the local leaders were convinced that it was possible to write their language. They decided to let

Sequoyah teach reading and writing to the people of their village.

Before long, Sequoyah's writing system had spread far and wide. Cherokee people living in all different parts of the country learned to read and write. They published books and newspapers. They wrote down speeches and laws. In 1825, Cherokee leaders made Sequoyah's system the official written language of the Cherokee people. Sequoyah was given a medal in recognition for all his hard work.

To this day, Cherokee speakers still use Sequoyah's writing system. In some parts of the United States, you can see street signs and billboards written in both English and Cherokee. Sequoyah will always be remembered for his important contribution to the Cherokee people.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did Sequoyah invent?

- A. a writing system for the Cherokee language
- B. a type of silver jewelry for Cherokee ceremonies
- C. a new language for the Cherokee to speak
- D. street signs and billboards in Cherokee and English

2. The effect of Sequoyah's meeting with the village leaders was that they allowed him to teach reading and writing to the people of their village. Before the meeting, almost no one was interested in learning Sequoyah's writing system. What caused the village leaders to change their minds?

- A. Sequoyah travelled from town to town offering to teach people to read and write.
- B. Sequoyah's daughter read the words the leaders said while she was out of the room.
- C. Sequoyah created 85 symbols, one for each syllable in the Cherokee language.
- D. Sequoyah helped his daughter Ayoka learn each symbol in Sequoyah's writing system.

3. At first, Sequoyah had a hard time getting people to use his writing system. What evidence from the passage best supports this conclusion?

- A. "He traveled from town to town offering to teach anyone who was interested."
- B. "When she read each word perfectly, the local leaders were convinced that it was possible to write their language."
- C. "Sequoyah was disappointed to find that almost nobody wanted to learn to read or write."
- D. "They decided to let Sequoyah teach reading and writing to the people of their village."

4. Read the following sentence: "The Cherokee tribe had grown strong and powerful without the use of writing-why did they need it now?"

Whose voice does this statement represent?

- A. English-speaking people
  - B. Sequoyah's daughter
  - C. Sequoyah
  - D. many of the Cherokee
5. What is this passage mostly about?
- A. the life of a Cherokee man named Sequoyah
  - B. the invention of the Cherokee writing system
  - C. why the Cherokee did not have a writing system
  - D. how Sequoyah taught his daughter to write the Cherokee language
6. Read the following sentences: "Sequoyah set out to create a new writing system for the Cherokee language. At first Sequoyah tried to create a different **symbol** for every word in the Cherokee language-and there are thousands of words! He soon realized it would be very hard for people to remember so many symbols. Sequoyah came up with a new idea: he would make a picture to represent each syllable."

As used in this sentence, what does the word "**symbol**" mean?

- A. a type of communication that uses hand gestures
- B. a way of doing something that follows a set of rules
- C. a shape or picture that is used to represent something
- D. a sound that is used to represent something

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

Sequoyah's friends and family told him that he was crazy to try to invent a Cherokee writing system, \_\_\_\_\_ he did not let that stop him from trying.

- A. but
- B. therefore
- C. obviously
- D. meanwhile

8. What did Sequoyah call "talking leaves"?

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9. How did Sequoyah initially try to write the Cherokee language, and why did he abandon this idea?

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- 10.** Perseverance is the quality that allows a person to keep trying to do something, even though it is difficult. Explain how Sequoyah showed determination and perseverance while inventing a written language system for the Cherokee language. Support your answer using information from the passage.

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# Honey to the Bee

by ReadWorks



Bees are flying insects that feed on nectar and pollen. They are usually yellow and black and covered in fuzzy hair that makes collecting pollen easier. A bee's body is similar to that of other insects—for instance, an ant—with three major sections: the head, the middle section called the thorax, and the last section called the abdomen. The head of a bee has five eyes for seeing and two antennae for touching and smelling. Two sets of wings and three sets of legs can be found on a bee's thorax. Depending on the type of bee, the last set of legs might have little sacs that store the pollen that the bee has collected from flowers. Many types of bees have stingers. The bee stinger is the most feared part of a bee, and for good reason. Filled with poison, the stinger is a bee's protection from danger. The stingers are around 12 millimeters long. There are over 20,000 known bee species in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee.

Honeybees live in beehives, which have a distinct order that helps things run smoothly. At the bottom of the totem pole are the workers. Workers are young female bees. Some of their main duties include going out to find food (nectar and pollen), building the hive, and keeping it clean. Honeybees will travel up to eight miles if necessary to find nectar and pollen to bring back to the hive. Worker bees are actually the only bees that ever do any stinging. When this does happen, it is usually because they are trying to protect their hive from harm. A bee rarely

stings when it is away from the hive, but it might sting if it senses danger. The lifespan of a worker bee is anywhere from 4 to 9 months.

The queen honeybee is the biggest bee in the hive. There is usually only one per hive, and her job is to grow the family by laying eggs that will become the next generation of honeybees. She lays over a thousand eggs per day and can live anywhere from 3 to 5 years. When the time comes for a new queen to take over, some larvae are placed in special chambers to grow queen bees. These larvae are fattened up with royal jelly, a nutritious substance that worker bees secrete. It usually takes about two weeks for a female larva to grow into a queen bee. The first female bee to become a queen bee kills the other potential queen bees.

Male honeybees are called drones. They don't have stingers, and they don't collect nectar or pollen. Their only purpose is to mate with the queen. Several hundred drones can live in a hive at one time. As the winter months approach, the males are kicked out of the hive in order to make it easier for the queen and her workers to survive. Food needs to be saved as there are fewer flowers to collect pollen and nectar from. Less food means the drones are the first ones to go!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is a bee?

- A. an insect that lives near water and eats fish
- B. a red-and-black insect that lives under the ground
- C. a flying insect that collects nectar and pollen
- D. a crawling insect with two sets of legs and no wings

2. What does this passage describe?

- A. wings, legs, mouths, and trees
- B. totem poles and winter weather
- C. different honeybees in a beehive
- D. poison and measurement

3. Different bees in a hive have different duties.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A. Worker bees gather food; the queen bee lays eggs.
- B. Bee stingers are about 12 millimeters long.
- C. Bees have two sets of wings and three sets of legs.
- D. The honeybee is probably the best known bee species.

4. Which bees are probably the least important bees in a beehive?

- A. worker bees
- B. the queen bee
- C. female bees
- D. drones

5. What is this passage mainly about?

- A. honeybees
- B. the bodies of bees
- C. different types of insects
- D. antennae and wings

6. Read the following sentences: "There are over 20,000 known bee **species** in the world. The best known is probably the honeybee."

What does the word "**species**" mean in the sentences above?

- A. colors or shades
- B. orders or levels
- C. kinds or types
- D. duties or jobs

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

There is less food available for the honeybees in the hive during the winter; \_\_\_\_\_, the drones are kicked out.

- A. never
- B. even though
- C. including
- D. consequently

8. What does a bee look like, according to the passage?

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9. What are the main duties of worker bees?

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10. Drones are the first bees to be kicked out of a beehive as the winter months approach. Why might this be? Make sure to consider the role of the drone in the beehive. Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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# The Echoing Green

by William Blake

The sun does arise,  
And make happy the skies;  
The merry bells ring  
To welcome the Spring;  
The skylark and thrush, 5  
The birds of the bush,  
Sing louder around  
To the bells' cheerful sound;  
While our sports shall be seen  
On the echoing Green. 10

Old John, with white hair,  
Does laugh away care,  
Sitting under the oak,  
Among the old folk.  
They laugh at our play, 15  
And soon they all say,  
"Such, such were the joys  
When we all--girls and boys--  
In our youth-time were seen  
On the echoing Green." 20

Till the little ones, weary,  
No more can be merry:  
The sun does descend,  
And our sports have an end.  
Round the laps of their mothers 25  
Many sisters and brothers,  
Like birds in their nest,  
Are ready for rest,  
And sport no more seen  
On the darkening green. 30

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What arises at the beginning of the poem and descends at the end?

- A. the sun
- B. a bell
- C. a bird
- D. an oak tree

2. What is the setting of this poem?

- A. the nest of a bird
- B. a bush where birds live
- C. the echoing Green
- D. the home of Old John



**3.** Reread the second stanza of the poem:

Old John, with white hair,  
Does laugh away care,  
Sitting under the oak,  
Among the old folk.  
They laugh at our play,  
And soon they all say,  
"Such, such were the joys  
When we all--girls and boys--  
In our youth-time were seen  
On the echoing Green."

What can you infer from this stanza about Old John?

- A. Old John spends most of his time worrying.
- B. Old John used to play on the echoing Green.
- C. Old John likes being an old man more than he liked being a boy.
- D. Old John does not get along well with the other old folk.

**4.** Who or what are "the little ones" in line 21?

- A. young birds
- B. boys and girls
- C. mothers
- D. old folk

5. What is the theme of this poem?

- A. the disappointments of old age
- B. the importance of hard work
- C. the power of dreams
- D. the joy of playing outdoors

6. What is the effect of using personification in lines 2 and 4?

- A. Personification suggests that nature can be dangerous.
- B. Personification contrasts birds with human beings.
- C. Personification explains the difference between skylarks and thrushes.
- D. Personification creates a mood of happiness.

7. Whom does "our" refer to in line 15?

- A. the old folks sitting together under an oak tree
- B. the people who ring merry bells to welcome the spring
- C. the boys and girls playing on the echoing Green
- D. the mothers around whose laps many sisters and brothers gather

8. What "shall be seen" on the echoing Green?

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**9.** Define the word "sports" as it is used in the poem. Support your definition with evidence from the text.

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**10.** What is the echoing Green? Be sure to explain what the echoing Green actually is, not what takes place there. Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

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# Drip-Tips and Other Adaptations in the Rainforest

by Mimi Jorling



Tropical rainforests have ideal climates for plant growth. Tropical rainforests are hot, humid, and wet. They have abundant rainfall and are warm year-round. Temperatures range from about 85 degrees Fahrenheit during the day to 70 at night. Tropical rainforests get at least 80 inches of rainfall each year. (Compare that to how much your town or city gets each year.) These two factors also create challenges for the plants that live there. As a result, plants in tropical rainforests have adapted to these conditions by making adjustments in how they grow.

The perfect conditions for plant life-warm temperatures and plenty of water-cause plants to grow quickly. One consequence of rapid plant growth is the depletion of nutrients in the soil. It also creates a thick layer of leaves in the upper part of the forest (the canopy) that blocks sunlight from reaching the forest floor.

Most plants get their nutrients, water, and oxygen from soil. However, in the rainforest, where soil is not nutrient-rich, many plants don't rely on it for their source of food. Some plants called epiphytes, or air plants, have learned to get water and nutrients from the air. Some examples of epiphytes in rainforests are mosses, lichens, and orchids. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plant-they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

Other plants that grow on plants actually DO take nutrients from that plant. They are called parasitic plants, and the plant they grow on is called a host plant. Instead of getting food and

water from the soil, parasitic plants have developed roots to cling to a host plant, pierce through its leaves, stem, or trunk, and suck the nutrients out of the host. An example of a parasitic plant you might know is mistletoe. Parasitic plants can kill their host plant if they grow too rapidly. However, they tend to *not* kill their host plant because without a host, the parasitic plant will also die.

Another condition created by rapid plant growth is a lush canopy that shades out plants living below. Large trees grow quickly, reaching for sunlight. They create a dense shade that prevents sunlight from reaching the forest floor. In fact, only about 1 to 2% of sunlight reaches the ground in a tropical forest. Since plants depend on sunlight for growth, very few plants live on the ground. Instead, they find ways to live on other plants by climbing them, as vines do, or by growing very large, dark green leaves to absorb as much sunlight as possible.

Hot, humid, and wet conditions are also ideal for bacteria and fungi to grow. Water trapped in the crevices of a plant, in combination with warm temperatures, is a breeding ground for bacterial and fungal growth, which can harm plants. One adaptation many plants have made in the tropical forest is to develop smooth bark so that water runs off quickly. Another adjustment plants have made to shed water efficiently is to grow leaves with 'drip tips.' This shape prevents water from collecting on leaves. Look at the shape of leaves of plants around you. If possible, and after checking with an adult, gently pour water on the plant and watch where it goes. It may be channeled toward the stem of the plant or far away from it. These observations can give you clues to how a plant lives.

The environments plants and animals live in provide useful and harmful conditions for living. As a result, all living things must learn how to adapt to the challenges of where they live. The adaptations that plants in a tropical rainforest have help them survive in their particular environment.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What are the climates of tropical rainforests ideal, or perfect, for?

- A. building roads
- B. raising cattle
- C. extreme sports
- D. plant growth

2. One effect of rapid plant growth is the depletion of nutrients in the soil. What is another effect of rapid plant growth?

- A. the depletion of animal life in the lower part of the rainforest
- B. the creation of a thick layer of leaves in the upper part of the rainforest
- C. an increase in temperature from 70 degrees Fahrenheit to 85 degrees Fahrenheit
- D. a decrease in rainfall from 80 inches each year to 65 inches each year

3. Read these sentences from the text:

"There are also some plants called parasitic plants. They grow on other plants, their host plants. Parasitic plants actually DO take nutrients from their host plants. Instead of getting food and water from the soil, parasitic plants have developed roots to cling to a host plant, pierce through its leaves, stem, or trunk, and suck the nutrients out of the host. An example of a parasitic plant you might know is mistletoe. Parasitic plants can kill their host plants if they grow too rapidly."

Based on this evidence, how might a rapidly growing parasitic plant kill its host plant?

- A. by sucking too many nutrients out of its host plant
- B. by sucking too few nutrients out of its host plant
- C. by preventing the host plant from taking in food and water from the soil
- D. by trying to help the host plant take in food and water from the soil

**4.** Read these sentences from the text:

"Another condition created by rapid plant growth is a lush canopy that shades out plants living below. Large trees grow quickly, reaching for sunlight. They create a dense shade that prevents sunlight from reaching the forest floor. In fact, only about 1% to 2% of sunlight reaches the ground in a tropical forest. Since plants depend on sunlight for growth, very few plants live on the ground. Instead, they find ways to live on other plants by climbing them, as vines do, or by growing very large, dark green leaves to absorb as much sunlight as possible."

Based on this information, what can you conclude about the connection between a leaf's size and the amount of sunlight it absorbs?

- A. The smaller a leaf is, the more sunlight it absorbs.
- B. The larger a leaf is, the more sunlight it absorbs.
- C. The connection between the size of a leaf and the amount of sunlight it absorbs cannot be predicted.
- D. Large leaves and small leaves absorb about the same amount of sunlight.

**5.** What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Some plants, such as mosses, lichens, and orchids, have learned to get water and nutrients from the air.
- B. Instead of getting food and water from the soil, parasitic plants have developed roots to cling to a host plant, pierce through its leaves, stem, or trunk, and suck out nutrients.
- C. Plants in tropical rainforests have adapted to their warm and wet conditions by making adjustments in how they grow.
- D. Water trapped in the crevices of a plant, in combination with warm temperatures, is a breeding ground for bacterial and fungal growth.

**6.** Read these sentences from the text:

"Some plants called epiphytes, or air plants, have adapted to get nutrients from the air. Some examples of epiphytes in rainforests are mosses, lichens, and orchids. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plants—they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

There are also some plants called parasitic plants. They grow on other plants, their host plants. Parasitic plants actually **DO** take nutrients from their host plants."

Why might the author have capitalized the word "DO"?

- A. to point out a similarity
- B. to make a contrast
- C. to summarize a process
- D. to make an argument



**7.** Read these sentences from the text:

"Some plants called epiphytes, or air plants, have adapted to get nutrients from the air. Some examples of epiphytes in rainforests are mosses, lichens, and orchids. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plants—they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems."

How could the last sentence best be broken in two?

A. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plant. As an illustration, they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

B. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plant. For example, they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

C. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plant. Third, they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

D. Although they often live on other plants, they don't take any nutrients from the other plant. Instead, they get what they need straight from the air with special root systems.

**8.** Describe the climate conditions of a tropical rainforest.

Include at least three pieces of information from the text.

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9. Read these sentences from the text:

"Hot, humid, and wet conditions are also ideal for bacteria and fungi to grow. Water trapped in the crevices of a plant, in combination with warm temperatures, is a breeding ground for bacterial and fungal growth, which can harm plants. One adaptation many plants have made in the tropical forest is to develop smooth bark so that water runs off quickly."

Explain how the adaptation these plants have made might help them.

Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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10. Plants in tropical rainforests have adapted to their conditions by making adjustments in how they grow. Support this conclusion with evidence from the text.

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# Spinning Thunderstorms

by American Museum of Natural History

This article is provided courtesy of the American Museum of Natural History.

On a spring night in 2007, disaster struck a small town in Kansas called Greensburg. Shortly before 10 p.m., a siren went off. A mile-wide tornado was approaching Greensburg. And it wasn't just any tornado. It was a category EF5, the most powerful kind there is.

Its winds were estimated to be more than 200 miles per hour. In less than ten minutes, the town was destroyed and ten people lost their lives.

When the fury had passed, people clambered through the rubble. Cars and trucks had been thrown about. Homes were crushed, or simply ripped from the ground. "I'm in downtown Greensburg. There's really nothing left," said one resident.



FEMA Photo by Michael Raphael

*The tornado destroyed much of the town. Many residents needed temporary housing.*

## How do tornadoes form?

A tornado is a swirling, funnel-shaped column of wind that gets its start from a thunderstorm. Thunderclouds form when warm, wet air collides with cool, dry air. Then, strong winds form into a wide tube of spinning air. When the tube touches the ground, it becomes a tornado.



Credit: NOAA

*A tornado is a swirling, funnel-shaped column of wind. It stretches from a thunderstorm cloud down to the ground. A tornado gets its start when strong winds at high altitudes set a thunderstorm's winds rotating.*



Credit: The Field Museum

*The 200-plus-mph winds of a tornado can bend a stop sign.*

Kansans are used to tornadoes. The people of Greensburg live smack in the middle of "Tornado Alley," an area that spans eight states in the central United States. This region is a perfect thunderstorm factory. It has just what storms need to get started: cool, dry air from the Arctic mixing with warm, humid air from the Gulf of Mexico. Above the flat Great Plains, far from mountains and coastal weather, thunderstorms can form undisturbed. These conditions spawn more than 600 tornadoes, on average, in "Tornado Alley" every year.



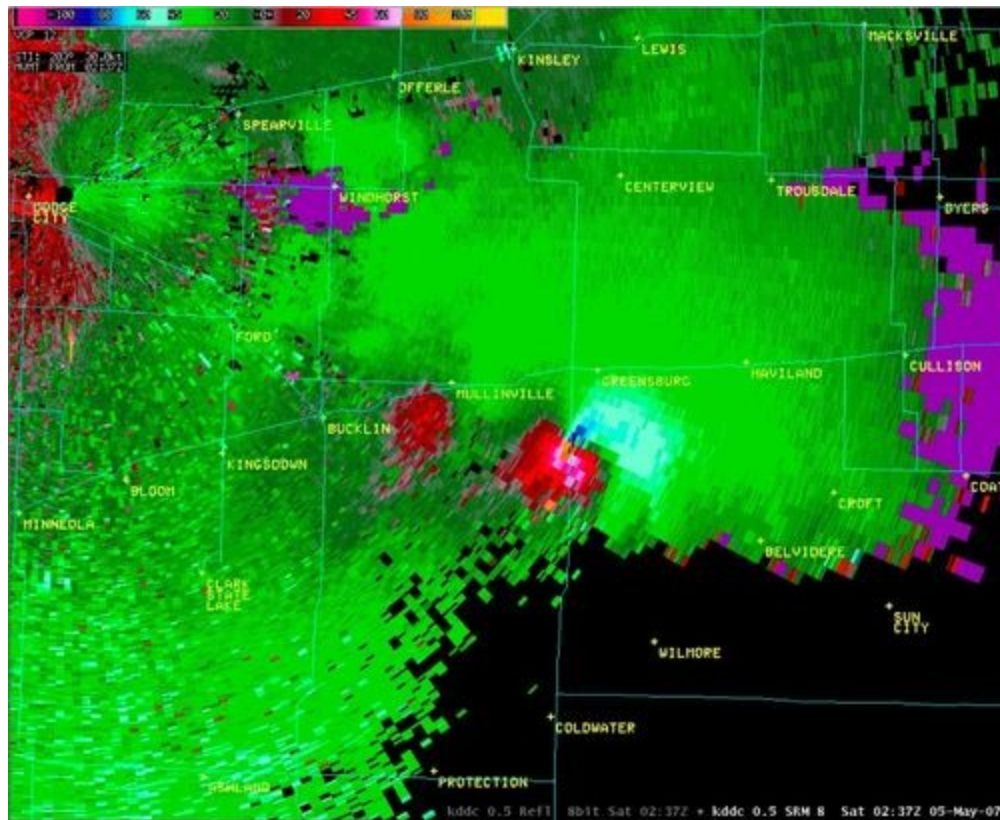
Credit: The Field Museum

*More than 75% of all tornadoes in the world take place in "Tornado Alley."*

## How do scientists predict dangerous storms?

Meteorologists are scientists who study and forecast weather. They use a technology called radar to track storms. Weather radar works by detecting the precipitation (rain, snow, or hail) in approaching storms. The radar unit sends out a radio wave towards the storm. The radio wave bounces off the raindrops, hail or snow that is in the storm, and then returns to the radar unit. The amount of time it takes for the wave to return tells meteorologists how far away the storm is. Most radar units send out about 1,000 radio waves per second. This gives them detailed, up-to-the-minute information about the storm.

Using radar, forecasters can track the formation and path of severe storms like tornadoes. When a tornado takes shape, its winds blow raindrops in a circular pattern. When scientists see that pattern on a radar screen, they know that a tornado is developing. Although tornadoes have fast swirling winds, tornadoes themselves move relatively slowly across the land (18-30 miles per hour). So scientists can make reasonable forecasts about where they are headed. A system of tornado watches and warnings are used to alert the public to danger. A tornado "watch" means thunderstorm conditions exist that could spawn tornadoes. A "warning" means a tornado has touched down and been spotted.



Credit: NOAA

*Doppler radar map shows the tornado shortly before it leveled most of Greensburg, Kansas.*

This system saved many lives in Greensburg. After the tornado sirens shrieked, people had 20 minutes to escape to their basements and storm shelters before the tornado destroyed their town.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What happened to the town of Greensburg in 2007?

- A. It was destroyed by a fire.
- B. It was destroyed by a tornado.
- C. It was destroyed by a hurricane.
- D. It was destroyed by an earthquake.

2. What does this article explain?

- A. how scientists use radar to track storms
- B. how the town of Greensburg was rebuilt
- C. how the system of tornado watches and warnings developed
- D. how cool, dry air moves from the Arctic to the middle of the United States

3. Read this sentence from the article: "Kansans are used to tornadoes."

What evidence in the article supports this statement?

- A. The tornado that destroyed Greensburg was a mile wide and had winds that were moving faster than 200 miles an hour.
- B. A tornado came through Greensburg and destroyed the town 20 minutes after tornado sirens went off.
- C. Kansans live in an area of the United States where a lot of tornadoes happen.
- D. "Tornado Alley" has cool, dry air from the Arctic that mixes with warm, wet air from the Gulf of Mexico.

4. What might be a reason why scientists track tornadoes?

- A. to encourage more people to use radar technology
- B. to warn people against living in "Tornado Alley"
- C. to lower the number of tornadoes that happen every year
- D. to gather information that is used to warn people that a tornado is approaching

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A. Tornadoes are dangerous spinning storms, but storm tracking and a system of watches and warnings can lessen their danger.
- B. "Tornado Alley" is an area in the middle of the United States where cool, dry air mixes with warm, wet air.
- C. The tornado that struck Greensburg threw cars and trucks through the air, pulled homes out of the ground, and killed 10 people.
- D. Radio waves give scientists information about approaching storms by traveling from a radar unit toward a storm and then returning to the radar unit.

6. Why might the author use headings such as "How do tornadoes form?" and "How do scientists predict dangerous storms?"

- A. to make readers think more deeply about the effects of tornadoes
- B. to suggest that there is still a lot to be learned about tornadoes
- C. to provide information about the pictures included with the article
- D. to help organize the information in the article

7. Select the word that best completes the sentence.

A tornado warning saved many lives in Greensburg \_\_\_\_\_ the town itself was destroyed.

- A. after
- B. although
- C. because
- D. for example



**8.** What is a tornado?

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**9.** Explain how radar could be used to track a tornado. Support your answer with evidence from the article.

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**10.** Could using radar to track a tornado help save lives? Explain why or why not, using evidence from the article.

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# The Tree Goats of Morocco

by Caitlyn Meagher



sachbearbeitung from Pixabay

*goats in an argan tree*

If you look up into a tree, you can often spot animals like squirrels and birds. But you may see a very different animal in the argan tree in Morocco: goats! Moroccan goats climb the argan's branches to eat its fruits.

The argan tree is a rare tree that only grows in Sous Valley in southwestern Morocco. This area is quite dry and hot. There are not many food sources for goats in this part of Morocco. So, these goats have gotten creative! When argan fruits ripen, the goats come in groups. They carefully climb up the argan trees, which can be up to 30 feet tall. They risk being pricked by its thorny branches. Then, the goats feast on the yellow and dark brown fruits of argan trees. The fruits make up between 47% and 84% of the tree goats' diet, depending on the season.

These goats cannot digest the nut inside the fruit, however. They either spit out the nut or pass it through their digestive system. Farmers gather these softened nuts and crack them open to get to the seeds. These seeds are roasted, ground, and pressed to produce argan oil. Argan oil is a rare item that has become popular throughout the world. This oil is used in cooking. It is also used as a skin and hair cosmetic.

Although these goats help farmers produce argan oil, there are other consequences to their tree climbing. Goats often spend an average of 6 hours per day on the branches of these trees. Their hooves damage the tree's branches. These tree-climbing goats are also a large tourist attraction in Morocco. Farmers have brought in more and more goats to this area to attract tourists, causing a decline in the health of the argan trees. Argan trees are now considered endangered. Some environmentalists are trying to help document this issue to save these trees. Hopefully, these trees will stand the test of time... and these goats will be able to continue enjoying these fruits for many years to come!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Moroccan goats climb the branches of what kind of tree?

- A. baobab tree
- B. palm tree
- C. argan tree
- D. oak tree

2. What causes the Moroccan goats to climb the argan tree's branches?

- A. They are trying to see farther so that they can watch for predators approaching.
- B. They are looking for food because there aren't many food sources in the Sous Valley.
- C. They want to hide from predators so they try to hide among the tree branches.
- D. They want to get water that is clean so they wait in the tree branches for rain.

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"These goats cannot digest the nut inside the fruit, however. They either spit out the nut or pass it through their digestive system. Farmers gather these softened nuts and crack them open to get to the seeds. These seeds are roasted, ground, and pressed to produce argan oil."

What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. Farmers rely on goats for an important part of the argan oil making process.
- B. Goats are not important to the process of making argan oil.
- C. Argan oil can be made with many different kinds of tree nuts.
- D. Farmers who know how to make argan oil refuse to share it with anyone.

**4.** How is tourism related to the argan tree being endangered?

- A. Tourism is causing more pollution in the Sous Valley from cars and trains, which is harming the argan trees.
- B. Some tourists want to make their own argan oil, so they try to harvest the argan tree nut themselves, which hurts the tree.
- C. Tourists often want to take pictures in the argan trees, so they are climbing the trees and damaging them.
- D. Farmers purposefully brought more goats to the area for tourists to look at, but the goats are damaging the trees.

**5.** What is the main idea of this text?

- A. Moroccan goats climb the branches of argan trees for food, which leads to the production of argan oil and some health problems for the trees.
- B. Argan oil is a consumer good that is used throughout the world for cosmetic purposes, like on people's hair and skin, and for cooking.
- C. Moroccan goats like to eat the argan tree's fruits, which are yellow or brown and which make up 47% to 84% of the goats' diets.
- D. Argan trees are now considered endangered, which is a problem because they provide argan oil and are only found in the Sous Valley in southwestern Morocco.

# Let's Play Pickleball!

by Nancy McCloskey

This text is provided courtesy of Reading Plus LLC.



TheVillagesFL, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons

*a view of pickleball courts from above*

Do you like net sports, such as tennis, badminton, and ping pong? If you do, then pickleball might be the game for you. Pickleball is a fairly new sport that combines many features of all three. It is played with a paddle and a plastic ball. It is played on a court (either indoor or outdoor) that is about the size of that used for badminton. A low net, similar to one used on a tennis court, separates the players on opposite sides.

The first question most people ask is, "How did pickleball start?" Pickleball was invented in 1965 as a game that all family members could play. The inventors were two dads from Washington state. They had been out playing golf on a summer day. They returned home to find their kids sitting around, bored and looking for something to do. They told the kids to go find their old ping pong paddles. They headed out to a local badminton court. They tried to hit a light plastic ball over the high net. Later they discovered that, by lowering the net to the ground, they could bounce the ball on the hard surface of the court. Before they knew it, the mix of adults and kids had a pretty exciting game going on.

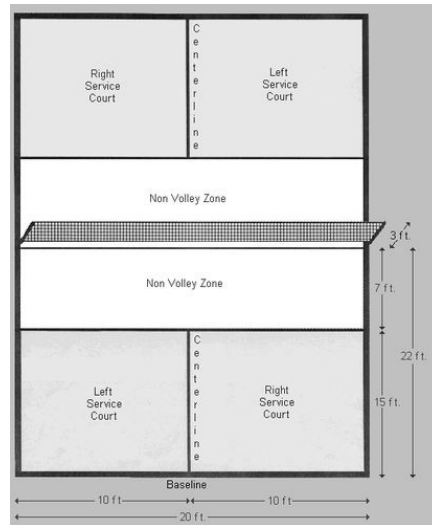
A week later, another dad joined the group. Together, the three of them drew up some rules. They focused on the new game's primary goal -- to involve the whole family in a competitive but fun activity. An official court was constructed. A few years later, a national newspaper and a tennis magazine published articles about "America's newest racquet sport."

The second question most people ask is, "How did pickleball get its name?" Believe it or not, the sport has no connection to pickles. One theory suggests the sport was named for the dog of one of the inventors. However, it seems that the dog joined the family after the game was started. In fact, the dog may have been named for the game.

Another theory says the name came from a term used in the rowing sport of crew, since the wife of one of the inventors was a frequent rower. This might make sense. In crew, a rowing team that is made up of the leftover rowers

from other boats is called a "pickle boat." Since the new sport used leftover odds and ends from three other sports, it would have been organized in the same random way.

However, the strange name hasn't hurt the popularity of the sport. If anything, it seems to make people more curious about the game. "There is something about the name," said Hillary Brown, a YMCA Fitness Director. "It interests people and catches their attention." According to pickleball ambassador Lisa Brochetti, "You get a good sweat. You're active. It's fun and really enjoyable. It's competitive, but there's friendship."



*This is how a pickleball court is laid out.*

Pickleball can be played with either 'singles' or 'doubles'. Singles means there are two players total, with one player on each side of the net. Doubles means there are four players total, with a team of two players on each side of the net. The game is played on a rectangular court that is 44 feet long and 20 feet wide. The net is 36 inches high at the ends but decreases to 34 inches at the center. The court is divided into four different areas called service courts. It also has a no-volley zone. The service courts are areas where players serve the ball. The no-volley zone is a stretch of court on either side of the net. For some reason, this zone is also called "the kitchen" (no one knows why). Players may not enter the kitchen to return a ball unless the ball bounces there first. This prevents tall, strong players from taking over the game. This feature of the game is important because the inventors wanted the sport to be enjoyed by players at all levels and ages.

Another rule of the game has to do with the underhand serve. A player must serve the ball while holding the paddle below their waist. This rule also shows the inventors' idea that the game is not about power. In many net sports, such as tennis, the serve is done high up. This makes for a more powerful serve. A player with a powerful serve usually wins the game. In pickleball, the ball must bounce once on each side after the serve before players can volley the ball back. This makes the play longer and more enjoyable for a wider range of levels and experience. The first side to score 11 points is the winner, and the winning team must win by at least two points.

In the warm, southern states, there are many adults who are retired. This means they have finished working and have the chance to enjoy other things. Many adults who are retired are in their 60s and 70s. Many of these folks have used pickleball to help bridge the gap between generations and connect with younger people.

For instance, in Arizona, many retired adults are volunteers who play pickleball with local students. As one person stated, these adults are "extending their mission of fun and exercise" to young students at places like the Apache Junction elementary schools. "We start by showing them how to hit the ball, and just a few basic rules," explained one

of the volunteers. "After five or ten minutes of hitting the ball, it's amazing how their eye-hand coordination comes around just by focusing. They improve so much in a short period of time."

The school district did not have extra money to pay for the necessary equipment. So, the volunteers were able to get funds from the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA). This money was used to purchase equipment such as nets, balls, and paddles. In addition, a local professional pickleball player and business owner donated 60 paddles for the students.

"I figure we'll have a little over 1,000 kids trained in pickleball, or at least familiar with it," observed the volunteer. "We're already planning a tournament for the kids, open to any of the students in Apache Junction." As for closing the generation gap, he adds, "The younger kids (early teens) can play with guys who are 70 and 80, and they get along great. They have a good time. They have no trouble playing together. It's a great way to bridge that gap. It shows the old people that not all the kids are smart-mouthed, and it shows the young people that not all the old people are grouchy. It just goes beyond all that."

After the first rulebook was published, the USAPA was organized, and pickleball has now spread to all 50 states. Today, the fast-paced, low-impact sport is spreading like wildfire. It has become a popular sport at community centers, retirement communities, YMCA facilities, campgrounds, and middle and high school physical education classes.

The popularity of pickleball has extended to other countries, too. Canada and India now have their own national governing bodies for pickleball. There have been very few changes in the rules and the court layout. However, the paddles, which originally were made of heavy wood, now are available in materials such as graphite or aluminum. These materials are extremely light and sturdy.

The USAPA, now called USA Pickleball, has a website where it lists pickleball tournaments around the country. More and more sports magazines are including pickleball as a regular feature. The sport has over 3 million players in the United States and Canada. Its popularity is spreading to European and Asian countries. It's easy to learn and fun to play, which makes it fun for people of nearly any age and ability. So grab a paddle and a ball, mark out a court with some tape or chalk, and give pickleball a try!



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Who invented pickleball?

- A. some dads in Washington state
- B. some grandparents in Oregon
- C. some kids in Alabama
- D. some dads in Maryland

2. What does the author describe in the first paragraph of this text?

- A. the story of the most famous pickleball athlete in the world
- B. the layout of the pickleball court and some rules of the game
- C. the different approaches to learning how to play pickleball
- D. the way that different pickleball leagues formed

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

"After the first rulebook was published, the USAPA was organized, and pickleball has now spread to all 50 states. Today, the fast-paced, low-impact sport is spreading like wildfire. It has become a popular sport at community centers, retirement communities, YMCA facilities, campgrounds, and middle and high school physical education classes."

What can you conclude based on this information?

- A. The USAPA ruined pickleball for families because it made rules that said that only adults could play the sport.
- B. Some retirement communities have banned pickleball because they think the sport is too dangerous.
- C. Pickleball rulebooks are confusing to read, so many people are making up their own rules to the game.
- D. As more people learn about pickleball, it is becoming more and more popular with people of all ages.

4. Read the following sentences from the text.

"Another rule of the game has to do with the underhand serve. A player must serve the ball while holding the paddle below their waist. This rule also shows the inventors' idea that the game is not about power."

How does this information support the idea that dads made this game to play with their families?

- A. Pickleball is hard to play if someone is shorter than five feet tall because of the net.
- B. Adults are usually the best at pickleball because they can hit the ball the hardest.
- C. Pickleball is fun for kids of all ages because it's not about physical strength.
- D. Some sports, like tennis and badminton, are better for younger kids than pickleball.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. It is important to stay active all all stages of life, from very young to very old, for the health of your body and mind.
- B. Pickleball is a fairly new sport that was designed to be fun for people of all ages, and that is gaining popularity.
- C. There is much debate about whether tennis or badminton is a more fun sport to play because they are so similar.
- D. Some people think that the name for pickleball came from the term "pickle boat" from the rowing sport of crew.

# The Problem with Self-Portraits

by Gabrielle Reyes



Luisella Planeta Leoni from Pixabay

*colored pencils*

"Today's project is called 'Express Yourself,'" Ms. Eng announced to her fifth-grade class. "You are all going to create a self-portrait that represents the artist—that's you! I want you to tell us something about yourself through the image you create, and then add a phrase or sentence to go with it. This is a great opportunity for everyone in class to learn more about each of you, so let's get started!"

Marites groaned, slumped in her seat, and stared at her blank sheet of paper. *Self-portraits are the worst*, she thought. *First of all, I never like drawing myself because the pictures always came out badly. How do you even draw a nose, anyway? Nostrils look ridiculous. On top of that, we're supposed to tell something about ourselves? The only thing worse than drawing yourself is talking about yourself!*

Marites picked up her pencil, looked up, and glanced around the classroom. To her surprise, everyone else seemed to be working already. To her right, Nora had gathered her supplies, placing a watercolor palette in front of her and mixing a pale purple. Nora's favorite color was purple: her backpack was purple and her sneakers were purple. She even had a purple streak in her hair. Across from Marites, Theo had drawn a large oval with thick Sharpie marker and was starting to add his dark brown curly hair. He didn't even sketch it out in pencil first,

Marites noticed.

*How does anyone know how to begin?* Marites wondered. She hadn't even picked out which art supplies she was going to use! *What colors "represent" me-black for my long black hair or green for my 'Save the Earth' backpack? My stuff comes in all different colors-my jacket is blue, my shoes are red, my sweatshirts are pink and orange. I don't even have a favorite color!*

"Class, I can't wait to see what you are going to share with us about yourselves," Ms. Eng chirped. "Show some of your favorite things. What's exciting to you these days? What are you doing when you feel happiest or most like yourself?"

Ms. Eng moved over to Ana's desk. "Wow, Ana," she said, "I see you're drawing yourself in some kind of spotlight. Is that background a stage? I wonder if you like acting or singing." Then the teacher glanced at the creation of one of the boys. "Lionel, it looks like you've pictured yourself wearing huge headphones, which makes me wonder what kind of music you like to listen to."

Marites felt a knot in her stomach as Ms. Eng stopped and looked over her shoulder. It was her blank piece of paper that seemed in a spotlight now.

"Hey there, Marites, it looks like you're still figuring out your piece."

"I...just...I can't do it," Marites muttered and slammed her pencil down on the table. "I don't know what to draw, I don't have any good ideas, it's...it's... just too hard!"

Marites felt her shoulders rise and stiffen and figured that she was about to get reprimanded. A second passed, then another. She glanced up nervously at Ms. Eng. But Ms. Eng didn't seem mad at all-in fact, she was nodding her head.

"Self-portraits are hard for a lot of people," her teacher said. "They're hard for me too! Tell me, Marites, what is one part of this project that seems extra hard to you?"

Marites's eyes swept around the classroom. "I just...don't know what to choose-or how to start. I can't think of one thing that represents me... I don't even have a favorite *food!*" she exclaimed. "When I'm sick, my favorite food is my Lolo's *arroz caldo*, you know, like a thick rice and chicken soup. At picnics, my favorite food is a mango sliced and dotted with salt. And on my birthday, my favorite food is apple pie-never, *ever* cake. That's why it is *impossible* for me to pick one favorite," Marites said in a shaky voice. "And I definitely *can't* pick one thing that represents me," she added, letting out a big breath of air.

"That makes all the sense in the world to me, Marites," said Ms. Eng, "and there's nothing wrong with not having one favorite thing. In fact, I bet most people are like that, if you really ask them. And you know what? The fact that you have different 'favorites' is really intriguing," Ms. Eng went on. "I would love to know more about them. What if you use this project to share many parts of yourself-the things you're interested in, the feelings you have, even the foods you like to eat *sometimes*?"

Marites's eyebrows scrunched together, as they always did when she was thinking extra hard. After a few moments, she began to nod her head. "I think I can do that, Ms. Eng. I have an idea."

She gathered up a batch of different colored pencils, finally picking a bright orange that looked like a ripe juicy mango. Next, she decided upon a brown pencil to make a bowl of warm *arroz caldo*, and then grabbed a black pencil to draw her straight long black hair. Finally, she filled her sheet of paper with different sized and different colored oval shapes to be her faces.

Marites wouldn't draw just one image of herself-she would draw several. And each one would represent what she liked... *sometimes*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What art project did Ms. Eng assign to her students in this story?

- A. to make a large sculpture
- B. to sing a new song
- C. to paint a colorful painting
- D. to make a self-portrait

2. Where is this story set?

- A. in a classroom
- B. in a cafeteria
- C. on the school playground
- D. in a car

3. Read the following sentences from the text.

*"How does anyone know how to begin? Marites wondered. She hadn't even picked out which art supplies she was going to use! What colors "represent" me-black for my long black hair or green for my 'Save the Earth' backpack? My stuff comes in all different colors-my jacket is blue, my shoes are red, my sweatshirts are pink and orange. I don't even have a favorite color!"*

What can you conclude about how Marites felt, based on this information?

- A. Marites felt frustrated and confused about how to represent herself in her self-portrait.
- B. Marites felt surprised and excited when she saw that her classmates were all working together to make art.
- C. Marites knew exactly how she wanted to represent herself.
- D. Marites felt happy and confident with exactly how to represent herself.

4. How did Ms. Eng react when Marites told her that she doesn't know how to start her self-portrait?

- A. She got mad at Marites for wasting time and not starting her piece.
- B. She disagreed with Marites and said that self-portraits are very easy
- C. She agreed with Marites that self-portraits are very tricky and hard to start.
- D. She told Marites to just do what all the other students are doing.

5. What is one major theme of this story?

- A. Being happy has to start with a deep understanding of the one main thing that you like more than anything else.
- B. Taking photos is a good way to understand yourself and your view of the world.
- C. It's interesting to like many different things, and it's ok to not be able to represent yourself simply.
- D. It's important to get feedback on art so that you can keep making it better, even if you don't like that feedback.

6. Read the following sentences from the text.

"That makes all the sense in the world to me, Marites,' said Ms. Eng, 'and there's nothing wrong with not having one favorite thing. In fact, I bet most people are like that, if you really ask them. And you know what? The fact that you have different 'favorites' is really **intriguing**,' Ms. Eng went on. 'I would love to know more about them.' "

In this part of the text, what does the word intriguing most closely mean?

- A. lucky
- B. interesting
- C. sad
- D. annoying

7. Choose the word that best completes this sentence.

Marites doesn't know how to start her self-portrait \_\_\_\_\_ she likes so many different things.

- A. however
- B. such as
- C. because
- D. in conclusion

**8.** What advice did Ms. Eng give Marites about her self-portrait?

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**9.** How did Marites solve the problem of not being able to choose one color or thing to represent herself?

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**10.** What did Marites learn about herself through this art project?

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