

6th Grade Passages

Middle of Year (MOY) Student Packet

Passage 1 *What Was Amanda's Message?*

Passage 2 *Suni*

Passage 3 *A Wonderful Friendship*

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What Was Amanda’s Message?

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Once there was a village beside a river. The lovely river flowed quietly to the sea. The river gave the people of the village water to drink. It also gave them water for their plants and animals.

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In this village lived a family with a young daughter named Amanda. She was quiet like the river.

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Amanda often walked through the forest near her house. She loved looking at all the beautiful

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trees. Her favorite was the willow tree. Its branches bent toward the ground as if reaching down to her.

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Amanda had a special ability. She noticed things that other people did not. Walking through the

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forest, she would see a squirrel sitting on the highest branch of a tree. She would notice the first

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golden leaf as summer turned to fall. During spring Amanda was the first to notice that wildflowers

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were beginning to bloom.

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One year there was very little rain. By summer the river had dried up. The people of Amanda’s

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village dug a well, but they did not find water. They had to go to another village far away to get

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water. It was a long, hard journey. Sometimes the people could not carry as much water as they

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needed. This caused them to worry.

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While walking through the forest one day, Amanda noticed the leaves of the trees. Without rain

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they had turned dry and brown. Then she came upon the willow tree. Its branches still had tender

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green leaves!

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“The willow’s leaves are still soft and green, but all the other leaves are dry and brown,” she said

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to herself. “Perhaps the willow’s roots can seek and find water that other trees cannot.”

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Amanda ran home as fast as she could. She couldn’t wait to relay what she had noticed to her

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family. When she reached her house, she saw that other people from the village were there. They

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were talking about how to find water.

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“The leaves of the willow tree are still green,” Amanda announced eagerly. “We should dig a well

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where the willow’s roots end. We might find water there.”

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The people of the village stared at Amanda in surprise. She was generally very quiet. In fact,

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many villagers had never heard her speak. They knew that her message must be important, so they

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followed Amanda to the willow tree. There they dug a deep well where the willow's roots stopped.

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Water filled the well just as Amanda had promised.

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The people of the village were happy. They began to sing and dance around their new well.

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Amanda was happy, too. She and the willow tree had helped save her village.

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Suni

My name is Suni. I am a Chinese White Dolphin. Do you know what's special about the Chinese White Dolphin? I'm pink. Most people have never heard of, or seen, a pink dolphin.

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I want to tell you about a serious problem that we are all facing. But first, let me describe myself.

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I live off the shores of Hong Kong and Southern China. This area is called the Pearl River Delta.

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There are less than 200 of us here. We are not born pink. In fact, when we are born, we are black.

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As we get older, our color turns to gray. Then it becomes pinkish gray with spots. It is when we

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enter adulthood that we become pinkish white and our spots fade. As adults, we usually reach a

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length of eight to nine feet. Unfortunately, most of the calves born today don't reach adulthood.

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Thus, they never get to show off their beautiful pink color. We could live up to 40 years, but

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because of the many hazards we face most of the calves don't even survive. We are endangered.

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Our population is dwindling.

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The water we live in is unhealthy. Raw sewage has been routinely dumped into our waters. There

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are so many fishermen that sometimes we get stuck in nets or hit by boats. I have a scar on my

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right side from when a boat hit me. Some nice humans found me. They helped me get well again.

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My wound hurt a lot, but I was one of the lucky ones. I've known dolphins that haven't survived

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that type of accident. The high numbers of fishermen pose another threat to us as well. They're

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catching so many fish that there aren't enough to sustain all of us here.

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We can't leave the area. It is part of our nature to stay close to the shore and to be in these types of

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waters. Legislation in Hong Kong has attempted to keep us safe, but that has not helped much. To

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raise money to help keep us safe, Hong Kong has started a dolphin-watching program. They bring

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people out on boats to watch us. We don't like that very much. We're kind of shy around people.

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We tend to go away from boats coming toward us, especially since so many of us have been hurt

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by them. However, sometimes we do perform and let them see us jump and dive.

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I want everyone to know about us. I want us all to be protected. We all want our calves to live and

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grow to be adults. We hope that these rules and many more new ones will help us survive. We

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don't want to be extinct.

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A Wonderful Friendship

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Helen Keller was a young girl who couldn't see or hear. Alexander Graham Bell was the famous scientist who invented the telephone. These two famous people not only knew each other, but together they also opened up new worlds of conversation.

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Helen Keller was born in 1880. When she was a baby, she lost her sight and hearing. Because of her inability to hear, she did not learn how to speak. Even so, it was clear that she was an intelligent child and was eager to learn. Keller's family did everything they could to find a way to educate her.

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When Helen Keller was six years old, her parents took her to see Alexander Graham Bell. He was well known for his inventions. He was also a teacher of deaf people. He considered teaching to be his most important work.

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Bell recognized Keller's intelligence. At his suggestion her parents hired a private teacher named Anne Sullivan. She worked with Keller every day. Through her persistence Sullivan was able to teach Keller words and their meanings. With a great deal of constant work, Sullivan taught Keller how to read and write. One of the first letters Keller wrote was to Bell.

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Bell encouraged Keller to learn as much as she could. Sometimes they would go on rides or visit the zoo. They also shared a love of books. Bell would tell her stories by using his fingers to spell the letters of words in her hand.

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One day Bell told Keller about his invention called the telephone. He explained how it was enriching lives. People all over the world benefited by being able to talk to each other when they were in separate places. Although Keller could not use the phone without help, she understood that it was important.

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Bell opened a school for deaf students and formed an information center to help people understand the needs and abilities of deaf people. Keller was very interested in Bell's work with deaf children.

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Keller had worked hard and set goals for herself. Because she wanted to help Bell by telling other people about his work, she decided to take lessons to learn to speak. When she felt comfortable speaking in public, she gave a speech at Bell's information center. She told the audience how happy she was to be able to speak to them about Bell's work with deaf people.

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Bell's invention of the telephone helped hearing people talk to each other. His teaching helped deaf people talk to each other and to the hearing world. His support and instruction helped Keller express herself by writing and even speaking. Helen Keller went on to finish college and became a well-known writer.

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When she wrote a book about her life, Helen Keller dedicated it to Alexander Graham Bell. This was a symbol of their lasting friendship.