

# 6th Grade Passages

## Between MOY and EOY Student Packet

- Passage 1      *Mistippee*
- Passage 2      *A Great Comet*
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## Mistippee

In November 1825 a group of Creek Indians met with men who worked for President John Quincy Adams. The Creek men needed help because people were taking their land. The following letter is from James, the son of one of the men who went to the meeting.

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November 30, 1825

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Dearest Mama,

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I went with Papa today to meet with the leaders of the Creek Indians. Papa needed me to help him with the horses. There were many Creek men sitting at the table when we walked into the meeting place. The Creek men sat tall and straight. They were very quiet. Their eyes were kind, and their voices were gentle. Papa told me that the man sitting at the head of the table was a chief.

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Standing behind him was a boy who looked 12 years old, like me. The first thing I noticed about the boy was his clothes. He wore a white cotton shirt, like mine. However, he also wore boots, a vest, and pants all made from deerskin. These clothes were very different from mine. I was wearing pointed black leather shoes, a button-down coat, and wool pants. The Creek boy had markings on his face. There was a line of blue dots painted on each side of his face and an orange sun painted above his nose. Papa told me later that each mark had a meaning.

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Papa and the boy's father told us to go outside while the men talked. The boy spoke perfect English. He said that he could read and write in English, too. He told me his name was Mistippee. He said that his father had educated him. Mistippee wanted to know everything about me and asked a lot of questions. I told him about our small farm where we grow wheat. I also told him that I share a room upstairs with my three brothers. Then he asked about my school. I told him that I go to school in the same room as my brothers even though we are not the same age. I also asked Mistippee many questions. He answered them all very politely. He told me his family has two houses built near each other. One is used in winter and one in summer. The winter house is made of wood and mud. Mistippee said that it is very warm. The summer house is made of wood and grass. It has open sides to let the air in. Mistippee told me his people fish and hunt. They hunt animals such as rabbits and deer for both food and clothing.

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His family grows corn, beans, and pumpkins. Some Creek children help their mothers dig in the fields, plant seeds, and gather crops. His people also gather berries and many other wild plants for food. Mistippee said he must help chop firewood and take care of the horses. I told him that I had

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to do those things, too. He laughed when I told him about how I almost got kicked by my horse the first time I tried to put a horseshoe on it. He said he had almost been kicked by a horse once, too.

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Before long, it was time to leave. Mistippee shook my hand and said farewell. On the way back to the inn where we would stay the night, I told Papa all about Mistippee. I hope that I get to see Mistippee again. Papa told me we should be on our way home in a few days. I miss you.

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Your son,

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James

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## A Great Comet

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For six months in 1997, people watched a glowing object in the night sky. Comet Hale-Bopp made a show in the sky that lasted from January to June. Its head shone as brightly as a star. Its tail swept back like a fan. Some people thought it might be the best comet to pass by Earth in 20 years.

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Comets begin as dirty chunks of rock in an icy fog. Some of these rocks move toward the sun when its gravity pulls them. Once the rocks get near the sun, they begin to look like comets. Each comet forms a tail and a round head that are characteristic of all comets. The round head and tail make a comet easy to recognize. Comets travel in orbits, or circles, around the sun. These orbits can be big or small. Comets that make small orbits around the sun come near Earth every 200 years or less. They are not very bright, but we see them more often.

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Hale-Bopp is a comet that makes big orbits around the sun. It will not pass near Earth again for about 2,400 years.

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In the 1990s about 12 comets a year were discovered. Most of these could not be seen in the sky without special equipment because they did not come very close to Earth. Even though Hale-Bopp was far away from Earth, it could be seen because its head was huge. The heads of most comets are no larger than six miles in diameter. Hale-Bopp's head was about 25 miles across. Because of its size, Hale-Bopp glowed brightly. Most of the famous comets have had long, thin tails that streamed for millions of miles. Hale-Bopp's tail was wider and shorter.

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People enjoyed watching Hale-Bopp for several reasons. It glowed brightly. Hale-Bopp could be seen without a telescope for six months, from an hour after sunset until an hour before sunrise each day. Everyone had sufficient time to see this bright traveler. There were plenty of chances to look at it. There will continue to be many more comets for us to see. Like Hale-Bopp, they will look like glowing balls in the night sky.

## Dolley Madison Saves the Day

During the War of 1812 between the United States and Great Britain, British troops marched toward Washington, D.C. They had already defeated a group of U.S. soldiers nearby. Now they were headed for the nation's capital. They threatened to burn all government buildings, including the White House. The White House was the home of James Madison, the fourth President of the United States, and his wife Dolley.

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On August 22, 1814, President Madison left the White House to join the U.S. soldiers. While Dolley waited to hear from him, she packed important documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. She sent them to Virginia for safekeeping. As the hours ticked by, Dolley began to worry. From her windows in the White House, she nervously watched people fleeing the city. On August 24 a courier delivered important information. He said that the British were approaching and that Dolley should leave immediately.

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However, Dolley refused to go until one more task was complete. A large painting of George Washington was fastened tightly to the wall, but no tools were available to remove it. Dolley ordered that the frame be broken in order to remove the canvas. After the painting had been rolled up and sent to a safe place, Dolley raced from the White House, leaving behind almost all of her personal belongings. At 8:00 that evening, British troops entered Washington. Although the troops completely burned the White House and other government buildings, both President Madison and Dolley were safe. The precious painting of the first U.S. President and all important papers associated with the United States had been saved. Many would call Dolley's actions heroic. But Dolley never thought of herself as a hero. She felt what she had done was her duty to the country as First Lady.

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