

# 6th Grade Progress Monitoring

## August–November Student Packet

Texas Middle School Fluency Assessment—Version 2.0 © 2010 Texas Education Agency, University of Houston, and The University of Texas System

These materials are copyrighted © by and are the property of the Texas Education Agency, the University of Houston, and The University of Texas System and may not be reproduced without their written permission, except by Texas public school educators in Texas under the following conditions:

1. any portion reproduced will be used exclusively for nonprofit educational purposes;
2. any portion reproduced will be reproduced in its entirety and remain unedited, unaltered, and unchanged in any way; and
3. no monetary charge is made for the reproduced materials or any document containing them; however, a reasonable charge to cover only the cost of reproduction and distribution may be charged.

## The Blue Morpho Butterfly

Butterflies are beautiful. Butterflies are amazing. One species of butterfly is the Blue Morpho.

14

The Blue Morpho has bright blue wings. Its wingspan is about 6 inches. The underside of the wings is brown. It has eyespots too. Scientists say that these eyespots scare away predators. The eyespots look like the eyes of larger animals. Thus, predators will not be as likely to attack. The eyespots keep the butterfly safe. The color difference is useful in another way too. The butterfly looks like it keeps disappearing when it flies.

31

47

65

81

89

The Blue Morpho likes different foods. It drinks the juices of rotting fruit. It likes tree sap. It likes wet mud. It even eats fungi too.

108

115

The Blue Morpho is found in the rainforests of South and Central America. It likes the tall trees. It likes moist air. Many people love to look at this beautiful butterfly. It is a popular butterfly for collectors.

133

152

153

## The Aye Aye

The Aye Aye is a type of primate. It is found only in Madagascar. It is an interesting animal.

19

Aye Ayes are nocturnal. They sleep all day. They are awake at night. Their homes are nests in trees.

38

They don't live in groups. They live alone.

46

Aye Ayes have a special way of looking for food. One of their fingers is long and thin. They use

66

this to tap the trunks of trees. They are searching for insects inside the tree. They tap the tree so

86

that they can hear if insects have made tunnels inside.

96

They can tell by the feel and sound if they have found a tunnel. They have strong, sharp teeth.

115

They use them to cut a hole in the tree. Then they use their long fingers to scoop the insects out of

137

the tree.

139

Unfortunately, the Aye Aye is an endangered species—not many are left alive. So people must

155

work to protect them.

159

## Hans

16

Hans Christian Anderson was a famous author. He wrote children’s stories and fairy tales. But he only became famous after a lot of hard work.

25

44

63

When Hans was young, he didn’t play sports like the other boys. Hans liked to make up stories. He made a stage out of wood for his dolls and animals. Then, he would have them perform his stories. He could do this for hours.

69

87

105

Hans’ family was poor. They lived in a small house in Denmark. But that didn’t bother Hans. His father loved him very much and encouraged his talents. At age 7, Hans saw his first play. After that, he told his father he wanted to be an actor.

116

136

Hans left home when he was 14. He went to the city. He wanted to become an actor. But people laughed at him. Nobody gave him a chance.

144

163

179

Hans knew he was good at making up stories. People loved to hear them. So he decided to write stories instead of act. Hans could tell wonderful stories. But he didn’t have much schooling. He could not write them well. Then he met a man who offered to send him to grammar school.

197

215

Hans studied hard. But he felt awkward because he was much older than the other pupils. He was often laughed at because he was several years older than the other students.

228

245

Hans continued to work hard and eventually went to a university. He began to write more. His fairy tales became very popular. Children everywhere loved them.

254

271

288

Over the next few years, his writing became so popular that almost everyone knew his name. He began to travel to many countries. Kings and princes invited him to their palaces. Hans felt very important and special.

291

310

314

Hans lived a long life and was loved by many people. He felt very proud to be doing something that made others happy.

## Penguins

16

Penguins are very interesting birds. Most penguins live in very cold places. To keep warm, they huddle together. The warmest place is on the inside of the huddle. They take turns standing on the outside.

34

35

They also have feathers that are very small and thick. These feathers help keep the penguin warm.

52

Penguins have small wings but cannot fly. Their legs are very short. And they waddle when they walk. These birds can slide across the ice faster than waddling with their feet. Their feet are like flippers. They use them as paddles. That makes swimming easy.

69

87

97

Like other birds, the female lays the egg. Then the male takes over the care of the egg. He keeps the egg off the ice and warm until it hatches. First, he balances the egg on his feet. Next, he covers it with a special fold of skin. This keeps the egg warm. Penguins are unusual birds.

117

138

154

## A Soothing Song

20

Kayla stood and stared into the box at her feet. The puppy she had found had been crying for an hour. Now Kayla was ready to cry, too. Kayla knew her parents were tired of listening to the noise.

39

56

She had tried everything she could think of—chew toys, food, a warm blanket. Nothing made the puppy happy. She wanted to keep him, and her parents had said he could stay if he behaved.

74

94

108

So Kayla didn't cry. She wouldn't give up! She sat down on the floor and began to sing. The puppy stopped howling. Kayla smiled and sang some more. Maybe this would work after all .

## The Writing Pencil

22

Josh had to write a story for school. Time was running out. He had to turn in his paper in two days. He was beginning to worry. “What if I can’t think of a good story?” he wondered. Josh thought of flying cars and tall mountains and faraway lands. He picked up the new pencil that was a present from his aunt. Then he looked at the clean, white paper. No ideas came to him.

41

59

75

Josh went to sleep. He had a dream about a pencil that could write wonderful stories. All Josh had to do was hold the pencil on the paper.

94

103

When Josh woke up the next morning, he looked at his new pencil. He knew what he would write about. He wrote so fast that the pencil seemed to be writing the story all by itself!

122

139

## Koalas

16

Koalas live in Australia. Sometimes people call them koala bears. But koalas are not bears. They are marsupials. Marsupials are mammals that have pouches.

24

41

58

When koalas are born, they immediately go to their mother's pouch. They stay there for about six months. This is where they grow and develop. Baby koalas are called joeys. When they are born, they are very tiny. They are no bigger than a peanut.

69

87

107

Joeys cannot see or hear when they are born. These senses develop in the pouch. After they leave the pouch, they ride on their mother's backs until they are ready to be on their own. Koalas can be on their own when they are about a year old.

117

133

150

170

Koalas are very gentle animals. They keep to themselves and don't hurt other animals. They are nocturnal. Koalas sleep for about 18 hours each day. They have large, rubbery noses. Their ears are big and floppy. And they have thumbs that make it easy to grip trees and food. Their soft fur makes them look cuddly and cute.

175

191

Koalas live in eucalyptus trees. They spend most of their days there. They eat only eucalyptus leaves. Koalas rarely drink water. They get all the water they need from the eucalyptus leaves.

207

229

When a koala is around the age of 2 or 3, he is considered fully grown. At this age, a female koala can have a baby of her own.

236

254

271

289

306

312

The number of koalas has dwindled over the years. People used to hunt koalas for their fur. Their forests have been destroyed to build houses. Many have been killed or injured by cars. Because of this, Australia has made it a protected animal. People are no longer allowed to hunt them. But there are no laws protecting their forests. Many koalas now live in zoos or special areas where people can make sure they stay safe.



## Underground Town

16  
34  
50  
67

How would you like to live underground? Many families in the town of Coober Pedy, Australia, do just that. Their houses, called dugouts, are carved out of the earth. They are similar to regular houses. They have kitchens, bedrooms, and living rooms, but they have few windows. Most of the light in the houses is artificial. It comes from lamps and overhead lights instead of direct sunlight. The roofs of the homes are made of layers and layers of dirt.

80  
98  
114  
132

People in the town build dugouts because of where they live. Coober Pedy is in a desert in southern Australia. Temperatures can climb as high as 120 degrees in the summer. They can plunge as low as 32 degrees in the winter. Dust storms and swarms of flies can make life miserable. Underground, though, it is always a comfortable 75 degrees. People don't even need fans.

146  
165

Why would people want to live in such a place? Coober Pedy is an opal-mining town. Opals are colorful stones used for jewelry. The mines in Coober Pedy produce most of the world's opals.

181  
196  
212  
226  
229

Early settlers in Coober Pedy realized that they could avoid the harsh temperatures by building their homes underground. Today almost half of the 3,500 people in the town live in dugouts. Restaurants, schools, and other buildings are also underground. People in Coober Pedy enjoy their lives "down under."

## Vickie and the Kitten

19  
40  
56  
74  
92

Vickie wanted a kitten more than anything. When she was old enough to take care of a pet, her parents bought her a kitten as a surprise. It was tiny and as white and soft as cotton. In fact, Vickie named him Cotton. After her parents brought him home, Vickie and her brother Kevin played with Cotton. They watched him chase a piece of string. They took turns holding him and petting his soft fur. Vickie and Kevin held the kitten close. Cotton purred and looked up at them with big green eyes.

93  
112

Then Kevin began to sneeze, and his eyes became red. The more he held the kitten, the more he sneezed.

113  
129

“Uh-oh,” their dad said with a worried look. “Maybe Kevin shouldn’t be in contact with the kitten.”

130

“I’ll keep Cotton in my room away from Kevin,” Vickie suggested. “Then Kevin won’t sneeze.”

145  
161

But Kevin kept sneezing, and his eyes watered. Finally Vickie’s mom said, “I’m sorry, Vickie. We can’t keep Cotton if he makes Kevin sick.”

169  
188  
207

Vickie began to sob. Her mom hugged her and wiped away her tears. “Vickie, I know this is hard. But we’ll find a good home for Cotton. With Kevin sneezing, this isn’t the right home for a cat.” Vickie understood, but she was disappointed.

213  
230  
247

The next day Vickie’s mom suggested that they call Mrs. Parsi, who lived across the street. She already had two cats, but she might know someone who wanted a kitten. Vickie agreed sadly while Cotton purred happily.

250  
270  
290

“I do know a family who wants a kitten,” Mrs. Parsi told them in a cheerful voice. “Their last name is Martin. They just moved into the house next door to me. They had planned to get a kitten once they were settled in their new home.”

297  
313  
328

That evening Vickie and her mom knocked on the Martins’ door. Mr. and Mrs. Martin greeted them warmly. They smiled with delight when they saw Cotton. “He’s beautiful!” Mrs. Martin said. “Cotton is the perfect name for him.”

335

Mr. Martin noticed Vickie’s sad face. He said, “Vickie, maybe you can help us take care of Cotton.

353

You can come over anytime and play with him.”

362

Just then a girl about Vickie’s age came down the stairs. “Oh, what a cute kitten!” she exclaimed

380

when she saw Cotton. “I love his big green eyes.”

390

“His name is Cotton,” Vickie said. “He loves to chase string.”

401

Together the girls played with Cotton. They laughed as Cotton jumped for the string and ran after

418

it. They talked together as they played. Vickie learned that the girl’s name was Marie. They would

435

be in the same class at school.

442

A while later Vickie’s mom said it was time to go home. Vickie smiled as she said farewell to

461

Cotton and handed him to Marie. Vickie waved. She thought, “Cotton has the right home now, and

478

I have a new friend.”

483

## Jim Henson

17  
35  
53  
71

Those of you who have seen the show Sesame Street know the wonderful puppets made by Jim Henson. When Henson was a child, he never played with puppets or saw a puppet show. But when he grew up, he made puppets that became famous. One of Henson's first puppets was a frog made out of his mother's old green coat. The frog's best friend was a pig. Soon many other puppets followed.

72  
91  
107  
124  
142  
161  
180

Jim Henson was born in Mississippi in 1936. He lived in a small town, where he rode horses and fished. When Henson was in the fifth grade, his family moved near Washington, D.C. After high school Henson needed to find a job. A television station was looking for someone to work with puppets on a new show. Henson had learned about puppets when he had joined a puppet club in high school. He was excited about a chance to be on television. He and a friend made three puppets and tried out for the job. They were both hired, but the show was on television for only three weeks.

181  
198  
213  
229

People at another television station liked Henson and his puppets. They decided to put them on an afternoon show. Later Henson did another show called Sam and His Friends. Many people thought only small children would be interested in watching it. People of all ages, however, thought the show was funny. In 1958 it won a prize for being one of the best shows in town.

247  
262  
278  
293

Henson's puppets began doing commercials on television, trying to get people to buy things such as coffee. His puppets also appeared on weekly television shows. In 1969 Henson helped make a new show called Sesame Street. On this show his puppets helped children learn numbers, letters, and shapes.

295  
312

Seven years later Henson's puppets had their own show. In 1980 the show was chosen as the greatest international television show of all time. It was seen in homes all over the world.

328  
345  
361  
379  
396

Henson worked below the stage so his puppets would be watched instead of him. When the camera was pointed in a certain direction, the people moving the puppets could not be seen. Henson always watched a television below the stage. This let him see exactly what the people at home saw during his show. Henson made his puppets seem real by turning their heads or changing the angle of their mouths. This made them appear to be sad, happy, or surprised.

409

428

429

Today people all over the world smile when they see these life-like puppets on television and in the movies.

## Mrs. Mason's Gift

15  
33  
51  
67  
83

Gina climbed the steps to Mrs. Mason's porch. She enjoyed visiting the former schoolteacher and listening to her stories. Mrs. Mason was sitting with a book on her lap, surrounded by her cats and the many plants she tended. Today was the day Gina would say good-bye until next summer. School would start next week. Her stay with her grandmother and the afternoons spent with her grandmother's neighbor Mrs. Mason were over for this year. Gina's parents were waiting for her in the car.

85  
102  
117

"Thanks for all the cookies and stories, Mrs. Mason. From what you've told me, school sure must have been different when you were teaching. It's hard to believe that computers weren't around then."

118  
135

Mrs. Mason smiled and said, "I have something for you." She handed Gina the book she was holding. The pages were blank. The word Journal was printed on the cover.

148  
164  
183  
201

After waving good-bye to her grandmother and thanking Mrs. Mason for the gift, Gina settled down in the back seat for the long drive home. She opened the journal Mrs. Mason had given her and found a letter inside. After reading it carefully, she knew she would soon fill her journal with memories of the summer and hopes for the new school year.

212

Dear Gina,

214  
234  
251  
270  
289  
307  
325  
343

Use this journal as a tool to focus on yourself and the world around you. You can write about your thoughts, memories, and daily life. Your journal will then be a personal record of things that are important to you. To keep a journal, follow these simple steps. 1. Set aside a time to write every day. Decide what time of day is best for you. 2. Write about things that interest you. People, places, and everyday happenings are good topics. You may choose to stick to prose or try some poetry. 3. Write the day's date before each entry. What you write will become more interesting to you as time goes by. Later you'll have fun reading your first entries. Once you start writing, you will get more ideas. I hope this little book will lead to many years of journal writing. See you next summer.

361  
363  
365

Your friend,  
Mrs. Mason