

6th Grade Progress Monitoring

December–February Student Packet

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The Blue Morpho Butterfly

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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Hans

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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

The Aye Aye

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

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

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

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Aye Ayes have a special way of looking for food. One of their fingers is long and thin. They use this to tap the trunks of trees. They are searching for insects inside the tree. They tap the tree so that they can hear if insects have made tunnels inside.

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

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

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

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Penguins

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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.

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

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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.

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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.

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The Writing Pencil

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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.

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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.

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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!

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Jim Henson

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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

Mrs. Mason's Gift

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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.

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"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."

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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.

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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.

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Dear Gina,

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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.

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Your friend,
Mrs. Mason

My Invisible Summer

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When my application for an internship at the local hard-rock radio station was accepted, I was overjoyed. My friends would be flipping burgers at fast-food restaurants all summer, but I was going to be a disc jockey, a real DJ. I would use my best DJ voice, and I would be admired by millions of fans. In no time I would be on my way to fame and fortune.

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It didn't take me long to learn that working in radio was not exactly the way I had pictured it. In the movies, radio stations are always situated in gigantic impressive structures in the middle of bustling cities. The radio station where I worked was located in a lonely-looking building on the edge of town. Only the 361-foot antenna made it look at all unusual. The boss explained that the large antenna was necessary for broadcasting at 680,000 megahertz. I tried to look interested as she explained frequency and other electrical terms, but all I really wanted to do was meet the DJs.

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When I was finally introduced to the DJs I had idolized for years, I was shocked. For some reason I had pictured DJ Kirk Krimson as the kind of person who might star in an action movie, but he didn't look much like a motion-picture star. He told me that when he began in radio, disc jockeys played music on vinyl records, not on compact discs; that really made him seem old. I didn't have much chance to be disappointed in my DJ heroes, though, because I almost never saw him.

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My job was to run the station from midnight to 6:00 A.M., and all the DJs worked during the day. They recorded their shows, and I just played tapes of their voices and song choices. Between tapes I plugged in recorded commercials. My favorite commercial was one about a new video game. Three times a night I got to talk on the air for five seconds—but only to read the call letters, the four-letter name that the Federal Communications Commission had assigned to the station. I never even got to say my own name! Maybe I'll try flipping burgers next summer.