

7th Grade Progress Monitoring

August–November Student Packet

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A Soothing Song

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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.

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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.

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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

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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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Titanic

- 21 April 10th, 1912, was the most exciting day of my life. Little did I know that it was a prelude to the most terrifying time of my life as well.
- 30 My father had moved to America several months prior to then. He found a good job. He had
48 finally saved enough money to bring my mother and me to join him. He surprised us with second
66 class tickets on a ship called the RMS Titanic. My mother told me it was the biggest ship in the
86 world.
- 87 I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it. It was enormous! My mom let me wander around
105 alone and explore the ship. I was 8 and grown up enough to know not to get into trouble or to be
127 a nuisance. I quickly made a friend on board. Her name was Marjorie. She was going to visit
145 America with her parents. We spent nearly the entire trip playing together and watching the other
161 passengers. We had hours of fun!
- 167 Everything was normal when I went to bed on April 14th. Around midnight I was startled awake
184 by the voices of men yelling and women screaming. My mother ran into the hall. She heard
201 someone say we had hit an iceberg. The ship was filling with water. We had no time to gather our
221 belongings or get dressed. We followed the panicking crowd toward the main deck. My mother
236 clutched my hand tightly.
- 240 Someone was yelling that the boat was sinking. How could this be? I looked at my mom. I
258 could tell it was true. People were frantic to get to the lifeboats. There were so many people. I
277 wondered how they could all fit into so few boats. People were pushing each other. I was knocked
295 to the ground. I heard my mother scream. A kind man picked me up before I was trampled. He
314 led my mom and me to a lifeboat and made sure we were safely aboard. As other people boarded
333 with us, I saw Marjorie and her family waiting in line. I yelled for them, but they didn't hear me.
353 I was scared for them. I wanted them to come on my boat. I wanted them to be safe, too. I told
375 the crewman that I would make room for them, but he gave the order to release our boat without
394 hearing what I had said. We had to leave without them.
- 405 I don't know how long we floated in the sea. We were freezing, wet, and scared, but we were
424 the lucky ones. We were alive. So many people were left behind that night. I wondered what
441 happened to Marjorie. I never saw her again.

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When we got to America, my father was waiting for us. His eyes were filled with tears, and he sobbed as he held us tightly. Years later I realized that those tears weren't only for us, but for all the people who never made it to America. Ever since then, even though my name is Jessica, he has called me Joy. He gave me that new nickname to reflect how he felt when he was told that we survived.

Koalas

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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Mistippee

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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 Friend on the Trail

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Doodle the rooster usually crowed at sunrise, but this morning Elizabeth awoke to the sounds of other birds. She poked her head through the curtain of her family’s covered wagon and gazed at the unfamiliar surroundings. Late in the spring of 1856, her family had joined a train of covered wagons. They had begun their long journey to make a new home in the West. That was more than four months ago. Soon they would reach their destination.

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After breakfast Elizabeth checked the cage tied to the back of the wagon. This was where Doodle and their three hens rode. Each night Doodle and the hens were allowed to roam freely. They had always returned by morning. Today, however, Doodle was not in the cage.

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“Doodle, where are you?” Elizabeth muttered. She looked in all directions.

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“Why don’t you walk down to the stream,” her mother suggested. “You need to get water for the day’s journey. Perhaps you’ll find Doodle there.”

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Grabbing the bucket, Elizabeth headed for the stream. She crossed through a field of lovely wildflowers. Along the stream’s bank she saw a Native American girl. The girl wore a round hat made of woven grass. She dipped her hat into the water and took a drink. Looking up, the girl smiled.

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“My name is Sisika,” she said. “I’m Elizabeth. I’ve come to get water and to find my rooster,” Elizabeth explained.

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Together they began searching. They did not have to look long before they found Doodle. He was feasting on large crickets in the tall grass.

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“Doodle, you’ve found a good breakfast,” Elizabeth remarked.

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“These are tasty crickets,” Sisika replied. “My mother dries them, and we make delicious cricket soup.”

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“I like to help my mother cook, too,” Elizabeth said. With these words Elizabeth realized something. It occurred to her that she and Sisika might have many things in common. She wished that she could stay and visit longer. Elizabeth carefully picked up Doodle in her arms. Then she remembered her empty bucket.

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“I can help,” Sisika offered. “I’ll fill your bucket and carry it for you.”

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Together Elizabeth and Sisika walked back to the wagon. Elizabeth returned Doodle to the cage.

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The restless oxen tugged on the wagon, signaling that they were ready to depart. Elizabeth reached

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into the wagon for her favorite doll. With a sad smile of good-bye, she gave it to Sisika. Then

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Sisika placed her necklace around Elizabeth’s neck. Just then a man rode up on a beautiful spotted

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horse.

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“This is my father,” Sisika explained to Elizabeth. The man helped Sisika climb up onto the horse.

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Then he noticed the doll that she was holding. He also recognized the necklace Elizabeth was

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wearing.

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“The river up ahead can be treacherous. There are places where it is deep and the waters are fast,”

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he said to Elizabeth. “Tell your father that Sisika and I will lead your wagons safely across the

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river.”

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Sisika and Elizabeth waved to each other. Then Sisika and her father rode to the front of the

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wagon train. Moments later the wagons jerked forward. The wagon train began to roll westward

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again.

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Crossing the river, Elizabeth studied her new necklace happily. She had made a friend on the trail.

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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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Vickie and the Kitten

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- 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.
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- Then Kevin began to sneeze, and his eyes became red. The more he held the kitten, the more he sneezed.
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- “Uh-oh,” their dad said with a worried look. “Maybe Kevin shouldn’t be in contact with the kitten.”
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- “I’ll keep Cotton in my room away from Kevin,” Vickie suggested. “Then Kevin won’t sneeze.”
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- 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.”
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- 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.
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- 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.
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- “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.”
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- 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.”

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

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You can come over anytime and play with him.”

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

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

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

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

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

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be in the same class at school.

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

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

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I have a new friend.”

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Jane Goodall: A Friend to Chimpanzees

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When Jane Goodall was a child, her family heard that a baby chimpanzee had been born at a zoo in London. To celebrate this exciting news, Goodall's parents bought her a stuffed toy chimpanzee. She named it Jubilee after the real baby chimp at the zoo. From that day on, Goodall kept the stuffed animal by her side.

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Jane Goodall was born on April 3, 1934, in London, England. As a child she was fascinated with animals. At the age of four, she sat for hours in a henhouse, watching closely. She wanted to find out how chickens lay eggs.

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While walking to school, she often stopped to watch a bird or squirrel. By looking and listening, Goodall learned about animals.

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From an early age Goodall loved to read. One of her favorite books was *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*, a tale about a man who could talk to animals. Goodall also enjoyed reading about wild animals. She began to dream about going to Africa to study them.

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About three years after she finished high school, Goodall unexpectedly received a letter. It was from an old classmate whom Goodall had not heard from in a long time. The friend wrote that her family had moved to a farm in Africa. She invited Goodall for a visit, and Goodall accepted. For several months Goodall worked hard and saved money for the trip. She also read more about Africa. In 1957 Goodall sailed to Africa. After visiting her friend, Goodall began a job in Kenya. There she met a scientist who told her about a group of chimpanzees in nearby Tanzania. He helped arrange for her to study the chimps in the wild.

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At first Goodall did not see many chimps. They would run away when she approached, but eventually they began to accept her. Within a few months they did not flee when she was near. Goodall watched how the animals lived and behaved. She carefully wrote down her observations. While doing so, she made many important discoveries about chimpanzees. She learned that chimps do not eat only plants, as scientists had thought. Chimps also eat insects and sometimes meat. Another of Goodall's discoveries was even more amazing. One day she was watching a chimp that she called David Greybeard. David Greybeard poked a blade of grass into an insect mound. When he pulled out the blade of grass, it was covered with insects. Then he ate the insects off the blade of grass. Later Goodall saw the same chimp using a stick to collect insects. This showed Goodall that chimpanzees use tools to get food.

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Goodall has spent many years studying chimpanzees and has become an expert on their behavior.

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Now she travels around the world, giving speeches about chimps. She wants people to be

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concerned about animals, both in zoos and in the wild. Wherever Goodall goes, her stuffed

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chimpanzee Jubilee is by her side.

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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.

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.

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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Faces on the Mountain

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In 1924 Doane Robinson of the South Dakota Historical Society had an idea. He thought carving huge stone faces into a mountainside would be a wonderful gift to the people of the United States. The monument would also attract tourists to his state. He hired sculptor Gutzon Borglum to do the carving. Mount Rushmore's giant faces now bring millions of visitors to South Dakota to see one of the largest public monuments ever created.

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Borglum chose Mount Rushmore in the Black Hills as the site for the carving. The mountain's rock face was 400 feet high and 1,000 feet across. The carvings would last because the rock was hard granite without deep cracks or other obvious flaws. Because it faced southeast, the rock face was lit by the sun most of the day, so the carved faces would not be in the shadows. Robinson suggested carving the faces of western heroes such as Lewis and Clark. Borglum wanted to honor the Presidents who had helped make the United States a great nation. Borglum's vision won out. He chose George Washington, the first President, and Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence. Next he chose Abraham Lincoln, his personal hero, and finally the great outdoorsman Theodore Roosevelt.

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Work began on August 10, 1927. Artisans used dynamite to blast rock from the mountain. Then they cut away more rock to create the faces. These master craftsmen sat in special chairs on long cables that hung over the side of the mountain. Borglum used a five-foot-high plaster model of the faces to direct the workers. When workers started carving Jefferson's face, they found that the rock on that side of the mountain was unstable. Borglum had to readjust his plans and carve Jefferson on the other side of Washington. The original carving of Jefferson's face was blasted away with dynamite. Lincoln was carved after Jefferson, and Roosevelt was carved last. It took workers six and a half years to finish the carving, though the memorial wasn't completed for 14 years because of financial problems.

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The memorial's 50th anniversary was celebrated with an elaborate party on July 3, 1991. Nineteen of the men who had helped build the monument attended. Today the site is more popular than ever, attracting close to three million visitors each year.