8th Grade Passages

End of Year (EOY) Student Packet

Jim Henson

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

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

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

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

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

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

409 Today people all over the world smile when they see these life-like puppets on television and in the
428 movies.
429

A Dream Turns 70

Early afternoon finds the base for Australia's Royal Flying Doctor Service a blur of activity.
15 A 35-year-old man has been seriously injured. In less than 90 minutes, a medical team will be
34 airborne, on its way to the victim 200 miles away.

44 Flying to give emergency care to the victim is just another day at the office—or in this case, away
64 from the office—for the men and women of the medical service, which today celebrates the 70th
81 anniversary of its first flight. That first flight, on May 17, 1928, was a dream come true for John
100 Flynn, the medical service's founder. Flynn came to the Outback in 1911. At that time, only two
117 doctors served this remote area of Australia. Flynn set up hospitals throughout the region. His
132 goal was to make medical care readily available to everyone living there. However, because of the
148 Outback's vast size, many people were still not able to reach help quickly. Flynn refused to give
165 up. He continued to look for ways to improve medical care in the Outback.

179 A friend suggested using airplanes to fly doctors to people in need of emergency care. Flynn liked
196 the idea and began asking for donations to start a flying medical service. It took Flynn years to
214 raise the money to make his dream a reality. But his efforts were finally successful. On May 15,
232 1928, the Aerial Medical Service was born. Just two days later it made its first flight. During its
250 first year it made 50 flights, treated 225 patients, and saved at least four lives.

265 Much has changed since then. The Royal Flying Doctor Service, as it has been known since 1955,
282 helps thousands of people every year. Its 40 planes, equipped much like hospital emergency rooms,
297 make thousands of flights from bases across Australia. Technology continues to affect life in the
312 Outback. However, the medical service's vital role has not diminished. Doctors still fly to people
327 in need of emergency care, and the service still flies patients to hospitals when necessary. After 70
344 years, people in the Outback still depend on the flying doctors.
355

Rocks from the Sky

16 Shooting stars are not really stars at all, but are actually rock fragments that enter Earth's
30 atmosphere from space. These fragments, which scientists call meteors, move so swiftly that they
49 begin to burn when they pass through the gases of the atmosphere. Most are about the size of a
64 pebble and burn up completely before they reach Earth's surface. Some larger ones, however, pass through the atmosphere and fall to the ground. Once they hit the ground, they are called meteorites.

81 Since ancient times people have claimed to have seen objects flash across the sky and, on occasion,
98 fall to Earth. But years ago most scientists did not believe these stories. During the 1700s some
115 scientists acknowledged that rocks might fall from the sky, but only after being hurled into the air
132 from Earth by lightning or a volcanic eruption. Thus, scientists remained incredulous that these
146 rocks had originated in space.

151 A few scientists began to study these events thoroughly. A German scientist named Ernst Friedrich
166 Chladni read written accounts of such occurrences and realized that the stories were similar in
181 many ways. He also examined some of the meteorites themselves and concluded that they were
196 not like the rocks of the regions in which they were found. In a book published in 1794, Chladni
215 argued that rocks could fall from the sky following the appearance of a meteor and that the rocks
233 came from space. Chladni's book was not taken seriously by other scientists, but other evidence
248 soon followed.

250 In 1802 British chemist Edward Charles Howard examined suspected meteorites collected from
262 four widely separated parts of Europe. He ascertained that these rocks contained large amounts
276 of iron and nickel, which do not normally occur together on Earth. Based on the rocks' chemical
293 composition, he declared that they probably had originated somewhere other than Earth.

305 In 1803 an event occurred that convinced those scientists who were still unsure. On the clear
321 afternoon of April 26, residents of the French village of L'Aigle heard thunder and saw a huge
338 ball of fire in the sky. Explosions followed, and thousands of rocks fell to the ground. News of
356 the spectacular occurrence spread, and a physicist named Jean-Baptiste Biot came to L'Aigle to
371 investigate. Biot interviewed many of the villagers and examined many of the rocks that had fallen.
387 Although the rocks resembled one another, they were unlike the rocks in the area. He concluded
403 that the meteorites had indeed come from space. This event was critical in changing the minds
419 of most scientists. They could no longer deny the existence of meteors and meteorites. But the
435 1803 meteor shower did not offer a clear and thorough understanding of meteorites. Another
449 hundred years would pass before scientists realized that very large meteorites sometimes strike

462 Earth, leaving craters like those on the moon. Not until the twentieth century, when airplane
477 travel provided better views of the landscape, did the existence of these meteorite craters become
492 obvious. Today, scientists agree that Earth has a number of craters caused by rocks falling from
508 space.
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