

8th Grade Progress Monitoring

August–November Student Packet

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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. Amanda often walked through the forest near her house. She loved looking at all the beautiful 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 forest, she would see a squirrel sitting on the highest branch of a tree. She would notice the first golden leaf as summer turned to fall. During spring Amanda was the first to notice that wildflowers 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 village dug a well, but they did not find water. They had to go to another village far away to get water. It was a long, hard journey. Sometimes the people could not carry as much water as they 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 they had turned dry and brown. Then she came upon the willow tree. Its branches still had tender 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 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 family. When she reached her house, she saw that other people from the village were there. They 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 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, 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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33 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.

47 November 30, 1825

50 Dearest Mama,

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

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

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

433 His family grows corn, beans, and pumpkins. Some Creek children help their mothers dig in the
449 fields, plant seeds, and gather crops. His people also gather berries and many other wild plants for
466 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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An Unusual Job

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Robert Crisman has a big job. He works to keep the faces of four Presidents looking good. He repairs cracks on Abraham Lincoln’s nose. He smoothes the lines on George Washington’s forehead. Of course, Crisman does not work on real Presidents. He works on Mount Rushmore.

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What is Mount Rushmore? Mount Rushmore is a mountain in South Dakota. It is made of a very hard rock called granite. The faces of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt are carved into the side of this mountain. The carvings begin at the top of the mountain. They are about 60 feet tall. They were made as a monument to honor these great Presidents. The carvings make people think about what these leaders stood for — courage, leadership, freedom, and a love of country.

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Why do the carvings need repair? Over time tiny cracks occur in the hard granite. When they first appear, these small cracks are not a problem. But the weather causes some to get bigger. In the winter, rain and melted snow get inside the cracks. When the water freezes, it makes the cracks longer and deeper. When a small crack becomes a large crack, it needs to be repaired. If it is not fixed, pieces of the carvings may break off.

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How does Robert Crisman do the repairs? Every September Crisman goes down the side of the mountain to see if anything needs to be repaired. To do this, he first puts on special gear. He uses safety belts like the ones used by people who climb mountains. Then Crisman straps himself into a seat. The seat is fastened to strong ropes. Two people on top of the mountain lower Crisman down. Each year Crisman works on the side of the mountain for four days. Each day he works on a different carving. As Crisman climbs around the huge faces, he carefully checks each one. He inspects the carvings for breaks and chips. If he finds a large crack, he fixes it. Before 1991 Crisman filled in the cracks with a paste that took three years to dry. Then a company made something new for him to use called silicone. The silicone fills up the cracks and dries in just one day.

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When Crisman first started his job, he did not like to look at the ground so far below him. Now he is used to working up high. He likes his job and knows he is doing something important. About two million people visit Mount Rushmore each year. Robert Crisman’s work helps keep the Presidents’ faces looking good for everyone to see.

Underground Town

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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

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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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A Wonderful Friendship

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Helen Keller was a young girl who couldn't see or hear. Alexander Graham Bell was the famous scientist who invented the telephone. These two famous people not only knew each other, but together they also opened up new worlds of conversation.

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Helen Keller was born in 1880. When she was a baby, she lost her sight and hearing. Because of her inability to hear, she did not learn how to speak. Even so, it was clear that she was an intelligent child and was eager to learn. Keller's family did everything they could to find a way to educate her.

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When Helen Keller was six years old, her parents took her to see Alexander Graham Bell. He was well known for his inventions. He was also a teacher of deaf people. He considered teaching to be his most important work.

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Bell recognized Keller's intelligence. At his suggestion her parents hired a private teacher named Anne Sullivan. She worked with Keller every day. Through her persistence Sullivan was able to teach Keller words and their meanings. With a great deal of constant work, Sullivan taught Keller how to read and write. One of the first letters Keller wrote was to Bell.

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Bell encouraged Keller to learn as much as she could. Sometimes they would go on rides or visit the zoo. They also shared a love of books. Bell would tell her stories by using his fingers to spell the letters of words in her hand.

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One day Bell told Keller about his invention called the telephone. He explained how it was enriching lives. People all over the world benefited by being able to talk to each other when they were in separate places. Although Keller could not use the phone without help, she understood that it was important.

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Bell opened a school for deaf students and formed an information center to help people understand the needs and abilities of deaf people. Keller was very interested in Bell's work with deaf children.

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Keller had worked hard and set goals for herself. Because she wanted to help Bell by telling other people about his work, she decided to take lessons to learn to speak. When she felt comfortable speaking in public, she gave a speech at Bell's information center. She told the audience how happy she was to be able to speak to them about Bell's work with deaf people.

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Bell's invention of the telephone helped hearing people talk to each other. His teaching helped deaf people talk to each other and to the hearing world. His support and instruction helped Keller express herself by writing and even speaking. Helen Keller went on to finish college and became a well-known writer.

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When she wrote a book about her life, Helen Keller dedicated it to Alexander Graham Bell. This was a symbol of their lasting friendship.

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

Spreading Wildflowers

18	Claudia Taylor was born in Karnack, Texas, in 1912. As a young child she was given the nickname Lady Bird. She grew up in the country, and it was there that her lifelong love of nature began.
37	Throughout her childhood and adult years, she has enjoyed being outdoors, looking for the beautiful flowers that grow naturally in open fields.
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59	In 1929 the state of Texas started a wildflower program. The highway department waited for the flowers to go to seed before they were mowed. Then the seeds would spread and grow into plants the next year. Lady Bird enjoyed exploring the countryside in search of different wildflowers. She continued to do so after moving to Austin in 1930 to attend the University of Texas. Four years later Lady Bird married Lyndon B. Johnson.
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133	In 1964 Lyndon Johnson was running for President of the United States. As he and his wife traveled around the country, Lady Bird saw beauty as well as blight. Some areas suffered from neglect and ugliness. When Lady Bird’s husband won the election, she wanted to do something to make the nation’s capital look more beautiful. The following year she found a way to do that.
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199	Lady Bird helped set up the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital. She was chosen to head the group of volunteers. They met once a month at the White House to discuss ideas and make plans. They decided their program could be successful only if people in the community were willing to get involved. To attract attention, volunteers planted flowers around the city in hundreds of places that many people passed each day. They encouraged businesses to plant grass, shrubs, and flowers. They organized cleanups and fix-up projects in neighborhoods. They also tried to improve school yards and playgrounds. The committee gave awards each year to neighborhoods, businesses, and public spaces.
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311	The ideas of the committee quickly spread across the country. Some states began setting up their own programs to preserve flowers and to plant new ones. Thanks to Lady Bird, many of these programs included wildflowers. In the state of Texas, people continued to strengthen the program that had been adopted almost 40 years before the committee began its work.
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371	The Johnsons returned to Texas in 1969. Lady Bird wanted to do something to encourage more people to plant wildflowers. She knew that little was known about growing these flowers in gardens and that more research needed to be done.
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In 1970 Lady Bird began a project to make the city of Austin more lovely. A variety of colorful flowers and trees were planted along the banks of a major river. Trails for hiking and biking were also added. This project helped inspire the idea for building a center for studying native plants. In 1982 Lady Bird gave a large sum of money and 60 acres of land near Austin to build the National Wildflower Research Center. The purpose of the center was to learn about wildflowers and share new information with interested people everywhere. In 1998 Lady Bird was honored for her tireless efforts to make our nation more beautiful. The name of the center was changed to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

Coral Reefs

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A coral reef is an interesting structure located in a warm, shallow part of the ocean. It is a beautiful world of shape and motion. Sunshine pours in through the ocean's surface, brightly illuminating the colorful scene. Many amazing plants and animals live in this underwater world. Fish swim through colorful rocky shapes, and crabs move in and out of caves.

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A coral reef is made by tiny animals called polyps. They discharge a substance from their bodies that hardens into limestone and forms their outside covering. Each polyp attaches itself to other polyps, adding other layers to the structure. The structure continues to grow upward until it becomes the base of a new coral reef. The three main types of coral reefs are the fringing reef, the barrier reef, and the atoll.

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A fringing reef is either connected to the shore or very close to it. It has a flat surface that appears at or below sea level. As it extends outward from the shore, it drops off into deeper water. It is usually divided into sections by channels of water, and it has a raised rim. There are many fringing reefs in the Hawaiian Islands.

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Reefs that are farther out from shore are called barrier reefs. The water that lies between a barrier reef and the shore is a shallow pond called a lagoon. The Great Barrier Reef is located off the northeast coast of Australia and is about 1,250 miles long. Its distance from the shoreline ranges from 10 to 150 miles.

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The third kind of reef is called an atoll. This kind of reef forms islands in places where it rises above the ocean's surface. An atoll has a horseshoe or circular shape. Its lagoon is in the center and always has at least one place where it is connected to the open ocean. Ocean water flows through this space, keeping the lagoon's water fresh. The Marshall Islands, in the South Pacific Ocean, consist of many atolls. All coral reefs are important parts of our environment that continue to provide homes for many plants and animals.

Faces on the Mountain

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.

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