

8th Grade Progress Monitoring

March–May Student Packet

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The Writing Pencil

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

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

103 When Josh woke up the next morning, he looked
112 at his new pencil. He knew what he would write

122 about. He wrote so fast that the pencil seemed to

132 be writing the story all by itself!

139

What Was Amanda's Message?

10 Once there was a village beside a river. The lovely
20 river flowed quietly to the sea. The river gave the
30 people of the village water to drink. It also gave
them water for their plants and animals.

37 In this village lived a family with a young daughter
47 named Amanda. She was quiet like the river.

55 Amanda often walked through the forest near her
63 house. She loved looking at all the beautiful trees.

72 Her favorite was the willow tree. Its branches bent
81 toward the ground as if reaching down to her.

90 Amanda had a special ability. She noticed things
98 that other people did not. Walking through the
106 forest, she would see a squirrel sitting on the
115 highest branch of a tree. She would notice the first

125 golden leaf as summer turned to fall. During spring
134 Amanda was the first to notice that wildflowers
142 were beginning to bloom.

146 One year there was very little rain. By summer the
156 river had dried up. The people of Amanda's village
165 dug a well, but they did not find water. They had
176 to go to another village far away to get water. It
187 was a long, hard journey. Sometimes the people
195 could not carry as much water as they needed. This
205 caused them to worry.

209 While walking through the forest one day, Amanda
217 noticed the leaves of the trees. Without rain they
226 had turned dry and brown. Then she came upon
235 the willow tree. Its branches still had tender green
244 leaves!

245 "The willow's leaves are still soft and green, but all
255 the other leaves are dry and brown," she said to

265 herself. "Perhaps the willow's roots can seek and
273 find water that other trees cannot."

279 Amanda ran home as fast as she could. She
288 couldn't wait to relay what she had noticed to her
298 family. When she reached her house, she saw that
307 other people from the village were there. They were
316 talking about how to find water.

322 "The leaves of the willow tree are still green,"
331 Amanda announced eagerly. "We should dig a well
339 where the willow's roots end. We might find water
348 there."

349 The people of the village stared at Amanda in
358 surprise. She was generally very quiet. In fact,
366 many villagers had never heard her speak. They
374 knew that her message must be important, so they
383 followed Amanda to the willow tree. There they dug

392 a deep well where the willow's roots stopped. Water
401 filled the well just as Amanda had promised.

409 The people of the village were happy. They began
418 to sing and dance around their new well. Amanda
427 was happy, too. She and the willow tree had helped
437 save her village.

440

Mistippee

In November 1825 a group of Creek Indians met
9 with men who worked for President John Quincy
17 Adams. The Creek men needed help because people
25 were taking their land. The following letter is from
34 James, the son of one of the men who went to the
46 meeting.

47 November 30, 1825

50 Dearest Mama,

52 I went with Papa today to meet with the leaders

62 of the Creek Indians. Papa needed me to help

71 him with the horses. There were many Creek

79 **men** sitting at the table when we walked into the

89 meeting place. The Creek men sat tall and straight.

98 They were very quiet. Their eyes were kind, and

107 their voices were gentle. Papa told me that the man
117 sitting at the head of the table was a chief.

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

233 Papa and the boy's father told us to go outside
243 while the men talked. The boy spoke perfect
251 English. He said that he could read and write in
261 English, too. He told me his name was Mistippee.

270 He said that his father had educated him. Mistippee
279 wanted to know everything about me and asked
287 a lot of questions. I told him about our small farm
298 where we grow wheat. I also told him that I share
309 a room upstairs with my three brothers. Then
317 he asked about my school. I told him that I go
328 to school in the same room as my brothers even
338 though we are not the same age. I also asked
348 Mistippee many questions. He answered them all
355 very politely. He told me his family has two houses
365 built near each other. One is used in winter and
375 one in summer. The winter house is made of wood
385 and mud. Mistippee said that it is very warm. The
395 summer house is made of wood and grass. It has
405 open sides to let the air in. Mistippee told me his
416 people fish and hunt. They hunt animals such as
425 rabbits and deer for both food and clothing.

433 His family grows corn, beans, and pumpkins.

440 Some Creek children help their mothers dig in the

449 fields, plant seeds, and gather crops. His people
457 also gather berries and many other wild plants for
466 food. Mistippee said he must help chop firewood
474 and take care of the horses. I told him that I had
486 to do those things, too. He laughed when I told him
497 about how I almost got kicked by my horse the first
508 time I tried to put a horseshoe on it. He said he had
521 almost been kicked by a horse once, too.

529 Before long, it was time to leave. Mistippee shook
538 my hand and said farewell. On the way back to the
549 inn where we would stay the night, I told Papa all
560 about Mistippee. I hope that I get to see Mistippee
570 again. Papa told me we should be on our way home
581 in a few days. I miss you.

588 Your son,

590 James

591

A Friend on the Trail

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

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

125 "Doodle, where are you?" Elizabeth muttered. She
132 looked in all directions.

136 "Why don't you walk down to the stream," her
145 mother suggested. "You need to get water for the
154 day's journey. Perhaps you'll find Doodle there."

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

213 "My name is Sisika," she said. "I'm Elizabeth.
221 I've come to get water and to find my rooster,"
231 Elizabeth explained.

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

258 "Doodle, you've found a good breakfast," Elizabeth
265 remarked.

266 "These are tasty crickets," Sisika replied. "My
273 mother dries them, and we make delicious cricket
281 soup."

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

335 "I can help," Sisika offered. "I'll fill your bucket and
345 carry it for you."

349 Together Elizabeth and Sisika walked back to the
357 wagon. Elizabeth returned Doodle to the cage. The
365 restless oxen tugged on the wagon, signaling that
373 they were ready to depart. Elizabeth reached into
381 the wagon for her favorite doll. With a sad smile of
392 good-bye, she gave it to Sisika. Then Sisika placed
402 her necklace around Elizabeth's neck. Just then a
410 man rode up on a beautiful spotted horse.

418 "This is my father," Sisika explained to Elizabeth.
426 The man helped Sisika climb up onto the horse.
435 Then he noticed the doll that she was holding. He
445 also recognized the necklace Elizabeth was wearing.

452 "The river up ahead can be treacherous. There are
461 places where it is deep and the waters are fast," he

472 said to Elizabeth. "Tell your father that Sisika and I
482 will lead your wagons safely across the river."

490 Sisika and Elizabeth waved to each other. Then
498 Sisika and her father rode to the front of the wagon
509 train. Moments later the wagons jerked forward.
516 The wagon train began to roll westward again.

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

541

Suni

My name is Suni. I am a Chinese White Dolphin. Do

11 you know what's special about the Chinese White

19 Dolphin? I'm pink. Most people have never heard

27 of, or seen, a pink dolphin.

33 I want to tell you about a serious problem that we

44 are all facing. But first, let me describe myself.

53 I live off the shores of Hong Kong and Southern

63 China. This area is called the Pearl River Delta.

72 There are less than 200 of us here. We are not

83 born pink. In fact, when we are born, we are black.

94 As we get older, our color turns to gray. Then it

105 becomes pinkish gray with spots. It is when we

114 enter adulthood that we become pinkish white and

122 our spots fade. As adults, we usually reach a length

132 of eight to nine feet. Unfortunately, most of the

141 calves born today don't reach adulthood. Thus,
148 they never get to show off their beautiful pink
157 color. We could live up to 40 years, but because of
168 the many hazards we face most of the calves don't
178 even survive. We are endangered. Our population is
186 dwindling.

187 The water we live in is unhealthy. Raw sewage has
197 been routinely dumped into our waters. There are
205 so many fishermen that sometimes we get stuck
213 in nets or hit by boats. I have a scar on my right
226 side from when a boat hit me. Some nice humans
236 found me. They helped me get well again. My
245 wound hurt a lot, but I was one of the lucky ones.
257 I've known dolphins that haven't survived that type
265 of accident. The high numbers of fishermen pose
273 another threat to us as well. They're catching so
282 many fish that there aren't enough to sustain all of
292 us here.

294 We can't leave the area. It is part of our nature to
306 stay close to the shore and to be in these types of
318 waters. Legislation in Hong Kong has attempted
325 to keep us safe, but that has not helped much. To
336 raise money to help keep us safe, Hong Kong has
346 started a dolphin-watching program. They bring
353 people out on boats to watch us. We don't like that
364 very much. We're kind of shy around people. We
373 tend to go away from boats coming toward us,
382 especially since so many of us have been hurt by
392 them. However, sometimes we do perform and let
400 them see us jump and dive.

406 I want everyone to know about us. I want us all
417 to be protected. We all want our calves to live and
428 grow to be adults. We hope that these rules and
438 many more new ones will help us survive. We don't
448 want to be extinct.

452

A Wonderful Friendship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

331 Keller had worked hard and set goals for herself.
340 Because she wanted to help Bell by telling other
349 people about his work, she decided to take lessons
358 to learn to speak. When she felt comfortable
366 speaking in public, she gave a speech at Bell's
375 information center. She told the audience how

382 happy she was to be able to speak to them about
393 Bell's work with deaf people.

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

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

474

Mrs. Mason's Gift

Gina climbed the steps to Mrs. Mason's porch.

8 She enjoyed visiting the former schoolteacher and

15 listening to her stories. Mrs. Mason was sitting

23 with a book on her lap, surrounded by her cats

33 and the many plants she tended. Today was the

42 day Gina would say good-bye until next summer.

51 School would start next week. Her stay with her

60 grandmother and the afternoons spent with her

67 grandmother's neighbor Mrs. Mason were over for

74 this year. Gina's parents were waiting for her in the

84 car.

85 "Thanks for all the cookies and stories, Mrs. Mason.

94 From what you've told me, school sure must have

103 been different when you were teaching. It's hard to

112 believe that computers weren't around then."

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

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

212 Dear Gina,

214 Use this journal as a tool to focus on yourself and
225 the world around you. You can write about your
234 thoughts, memories, and daily life. Your journal
241 will then be a personal record of things that are
251 important to you. To keep a journal, follow these

260 simple steps. 1. Set aside a time to write every
270 day. Decide what time of day is best for you.
280 2. Write about things that interest you. People,
288 places, and everyday happenings are good topics.
295 You may choose to stick to prose or try some
305 poetry. 3. Write the day's date before each entry.
314 What you write will become more interesting to you
323 as time goes by. Later you'll have fun reading your
333 first entries. Once you start writing, you will get
342 more ideas. I hope this little book will lead to many
353 years of journal writing. See you next summer.

361 Your friend,

363 Mrs. Mason

365