

READ

REFLECT

RESPOND

*Nonfiction
Comprehension
Skill-Boosters*

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A NOTE TO THE STUDENT

How well do you understand and remember what you read? Can you count on your comprehension skills to meet the challenges of today’s fast-paced world? The skill-sharpening exercises in the READ•REFLECT•RESPOND books can help you build confidence as you build competence.

The purpose of reading is to connect the ideas on the page to what you already know. That’s why the short reading selections in these books work to your advantage. Each reading provides a clear mental framework for ideas and information. This makes it easier for you to grasp the main idea and sort out significant details. After you complete two or three lessons, you’ll become familiar with the various kinds of responses required. This familiarity will alert you to important cues in the reading material. You’ll learn to focus on key vocabulary, important facts, and the core message of the content. In short, you will become a more efficient reader.

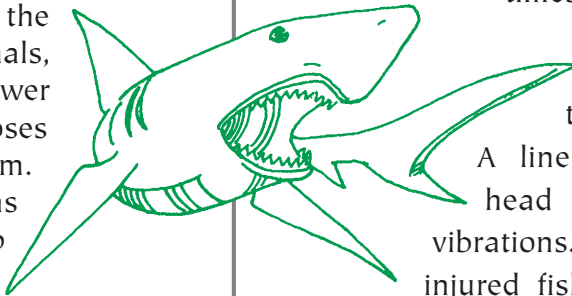
We suggest that you thumb through each book before you begin the first lesson. Notice that the readings are engaging and informative—some are lighthearted and humorous, while others are more serious and thought-provoking. Glance at the question pages to see how they’re organized. “Surveying” this book (or any book) in this informal way is called “prereading.” It will help you “get a fix on” the task ahead.

Happy reading!

READ: Do you know these interesting facts about sharks?

SHARKS NEVER SLEEP AND OTHER SHARK FACTS

- **Sharks are ancient creatures.** They were around some 400 million years ago! Even before dinosaurs roamed the earth, sharks hunted the seas.
- **Sharks are survival machines.** They're well-designed to stay alive. They have the strongest jaws on the planet. Unlike other animals, both their upper and lower jaws move. If a shark loses a tooth, it's no problem. Why? Another tooth spins forward from a back-up row. In its lifetime, one shark may grow and use more than 20,000 teeth! Sharks can feed on nearly any creature in the sea. The only animals that see sharks as food are other sharks, whales, and human beings.
- **No bones about it!** Instead of bones, a shark's body has cartilage—hard, bendable stuff like the material in human ears. This makes the shark flexible. Tough shark “skin” has hard, razor-sharp scales.
- **Seven super senses!** Sharks have the same five senses humans do: sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. But there are differences. Two-thirds of a



shark's brain is at work smelling things. It can smell one drop of blood in the sea. Humans use their noses for smelling and breathing, but a shark's nose is only for smell. Sharks see things in color. They can make out a light 10 times dimmer than any light we can see.

And sharks have two bonus senses. A line of sensors from head to tail picks up vibrations. They can sense an injured fish quivering in the distance. Another sense lets sharks “feel” electricity. A shark can sense electric pulses from a beating heart.

- **Where's mama?** Unlike most animals, sharks don't take care of their babies. Newborn pups fend for themselves. In some species, the strongest pup eats its brothers and sisters. This improves its own chances of survival.
- **No need for a wake-up call!** Some types of sharks must swim constantly in order to breathe. Sharks go from periods of strong activity to times of calmer rest. But it is true that sharks are ever-watchful. They *never* sleep.

REFLECT: Think about sharks.

1. Circle the four adjectives that describe sharks.

flexible watchful motherly
sleepy ancient vegetarian
alert soft furry

2. Sometimes the word “shark” is used to describe a person. What traits might such a person have?

RESPOND: Circle a letter or word, fill in the blanks, or write out the answer.

Identify a main idea.

1. Which is a main idea of this reading?
 - a. Sharks are well-equipped to survive.
 - b. Sharks have lots of teeth.
 - c. Sharks pups can be mean.
2. Write one *detail* from the reading that supports the *main idea* you selected.

Recall details.

3. Sharks have been around
 - a. since the early 1900s.
 - b. longer than dinosaurs.
 - c. less time than human beings.
4. Besides the usual five senses, a shark can also sense
 - a. weather and seasonal changes.
 - b. outcomes of future events.
 - c. vibrations and electricity.
5. When it comes to caring for their young, sharks
 - a. are over-protective.
 - b. ignore their offspring.
 - c. teach their offspring hunting skills.
6. A baby shark is called a
 - a. tadpole. b. cub. c. pup.

7. Sharks never
 - a. give birth. b. eat. c. sleep.

Match synonyms.

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 8. ___ flexible | a. stay alive |
| 9. ___ vibrations | b. alert |
| 10. ___ survive | c. bendable |
| 11. ___ watchful | d. quiverings |

Make comparisons.

12. List three ways a shark body is different from a human body.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Look it up in a reference source.

13. Name three species of shark.
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____
14. Are human swimmers usually in great danger from sharks? (Give details to explain and support your answer.)

READ: Learn about America's first black troops.

HEROES FROM HISTORY: THE BUFFALO SOLDIERS

In 1888, some unusual American soldiers galloped their horses across the Great Plains. All of these men had dark hair and skin. They were known as the Buffalo Soldiers.

Earlier that century, many African-Americans had fought for the North in the Civil War. They'd helped to end slavery. After the war, in July of 1866, the army formed the 9th and 10th Cavalries. Each unit was made up entirely of African-American soldiers. White officers commanded these troops.

On the plains and in the southwest, Native Americans watched these soldiers carefully. They admired their courage in the face of danger. Like the buffalo that the Native Americans held sacred, these soldiers were dark, fierce, strong, and full of energy. That's why the Native Americans called these men "Buffalo Soldiers," a term of respect.

Many white troops and civilians looked down on the Buffalo Soldiers.



But the all-black units performed well, even in the face of prejudice. The motto of the 9th Cavalry was "We can! We will!" The Buffalo Soldiers scouted dangerous regions. They battled hostile Native Americans and made peace with many tribes. They captured outlaws and mapped uncharted lands. They delivered mail, built telegraph lines, and protected forts, railroads, and wagon trains.

Several Buffalo Soldiers received Medals of Honor. The 9th and 10th Cavalries had fewer deserters than other army units. These brave men led the way for settlers and helped shape the West.

The story of the Buffalo Soldiers didn't end in the Wild West, however. All-black units served the U.S. armed forces into the 20th century. But not until 1992 were these troops honored officially. Since then, new monuments and movies have paid tribute to these heroes from America's history.

REFLECT: Think about the Buffalo Soldiers and their role on the western frontier.

1. Think about life on the American frontier. Then name two difficult or dangerous things about that life.

2. What, in your opinion, makes a person a hero?

3. What is the Medal of Honor? (Check a reference source for help.)
Why might a soldier be awarded this medal?

RESPOND: Circle a letter or word, fill in the blanks, or write out the answer.

Recall details.

1. How were the men of the 9th and 10th Cavalry different from soldiers of other army units?

2. What nickname did the Native Americans give the 9th and 10th Cavalry?

3. Why did the Native Americans give them that nickname?

4. What were three jobs done by the 9th and 10th Cavalry?

- ---
- ---
- ---

5. What was the motto of the 9th Cavalry?

Recognize the author’s purpose.

6. Why do you think the author wrote this article?
- a. to give credit to some of history’s lesser-known heroes
 - b. to create myths about life in the Old West
 - c. to explain why the South lost the Civil War

Build your vocabulary.

7. *Cavalry* soldiers (rode horseback / traveled on foot).
8. The Native Americans thought the buffalo were *sacred* or (scarce / holy).
9. The Native Americans *respected* or (admired / disliked) the Buffalo Soldiers.
10. The Buffalo Soldiers fought against *hostile* or (friendly / unfriendly) Native Americans.
11. Many white soldiers (admired / looked down on) the black soldiers because of *prejudice*.
12. Because very few black soldiers (ran away from their duties / were paid for their work), the 9th and 10th Cavalries had few *deserters*.

Look it up in a reference source.

13. Cathay Williams was the only female to serve as a Buffalo Soldier. Do some research about her. Then write a few sentences telling her story.

READ: Learn more about your sense of smell—one of the five human senses.

PHEW! WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

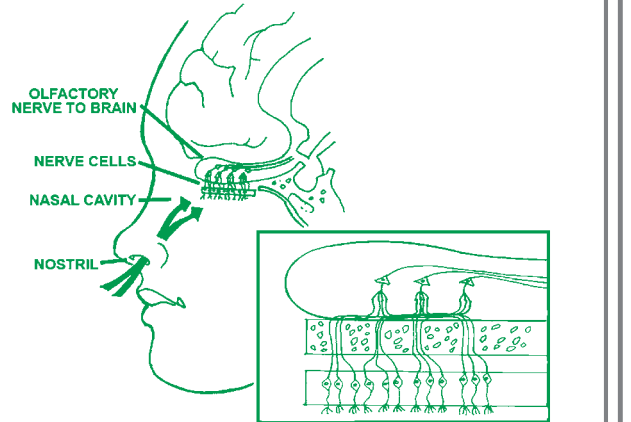
You open the refrigerator door. *Pheew!* What's that awful odor? Your sense of smell is warning you that food has spoiled!

The human sense of smell is very sensitive. It is not, however, as highly developed in humans as in most animals. Many animals use their sense of smell as their first line of protection. Their nose tells them when an enemy is near. And it leads them to food.

Smells come to us as very tiny particles in the air called *molecules*. When you breathe, the molecules go into your nose. Take a moment. Sniff the air. Breathe in those molecules! What odors do you smell?

The human nose has two holes called *nostrils*. Inside each nostril are nerve cells. They pick up the odor first. Then they pass it to the *olfactory* nerve, which leads to the brain. At that moment we smell the smell!

THE OLFACTORY SYSTEM



THREE FACTS ABOUT THE SENSE OF SMELL

- The olfactory lobes take up more of an animal's brain than a human's.
- A specific odor may seem strong when we first sense it. After about three minutes, though, we usually stop smelling it.
- Many "tastes" are really blends of smells and tastes. Is it an onion or an apple? If you hold your nose after taking a bite, it's hard to tell.

REFLECT: Think about different smells.

1. Name an aroma, such as that of strawberries, that reminds you of something *pleasant*. _____
2. Name an odor that reminds you of something *unpleasant*. _____
3. Certain smells can warn of danger. List three smells that may mean that danger is near.

4. Sniff the air. List some of the odors you smell. _____

5. After a few minutes, you usually stop noticing an odor. How might that be a good thing? How might that be bad?

RESPOND: Circle a letter or word, fill in the blanks, or write out the answer.

Build your vocabulary.

1. The air is filled with
m _____
that carry odor.
2. You breathe odors in through the
n _____ in your nose.
3. The o _____ nerve carries
the smell to the b _____.

Think about parts and wholes.

4. Many parts of your body work together to make your sense of smell work. List three main parts of your whole “smelling system.”

Recall details.

5. Human beings have a (stronger / weaker) sense of smell than most animals.
6. We normally stop smelling a specific odor after experiencing it for several (minutes / hours).

7. Strong odors can affect what we (taste / see).
8. Your food might have a different taste if you (closed your eyes / plugged your nose).

Put details in order.

9. The following sentences describe how your sense of smell works. Number them in the order in which they happen.
- ____ a. The odor is carried to your brain.
- ____ b. You breathe in odor molecules.
- ____ c. Odor molecules fill the air.
- ____ d. Nerve cells sense the odor.

Look it up in a reference source.

10. Where is an insect’s sense organ for smell?
-
11. *Anosmia* is an olfactory disorder. What is the primary symptom of this disorder?
-

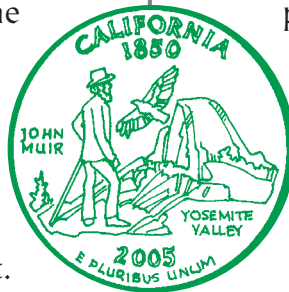
READ: Learn about a man who loved and protected our natural resources.

JOHN MUIR (1838–1914): FATHER OF AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS

John Muir was a student of nature. As a boy he had little schooling, yet he later became an author. He wrote that a day in the mountains was “. . . better than a cartload of books.”

At age 11, John came to the United States from Scotland. His family settled on a Midwestern farm. Hard work filled his days, but John made time to read and explore. And he also found time to invent. Among other things, he invented an automatic horse feeder.

As a young man, he studied at the University of Wisconsin. After college, Muir traveled. Along the way, a factory job ended in an accident that nearly blinded him. When his eyesight returned, he vowed to treasure nature's brightness. That's when Muir set off on a 1,000-mile walk from Indiana to Florida. After that he went on to Cuba and Panama. Finally, he settled in California. Muir spent many happy years living in the mountains there. He wrote that he often stood atop a waterfall and sang out with joy.



CALIFORNIA HONORS
JOHN MUIR
WITH ITS 2005
STATE QUARTER DESIGN.

John Muir made it his full-time job to write and speak about the glories of nature. His works helped convince U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt to protect the California wilderness. The president even joined Muir on a camping trip. That inspired him to set aside land as Yosemite National Park and Sequoia National Park.

John Muir became the first president of the Sierra Club. To this day, the club's mission is to protect natural beauty for everyone to enjoy.

California has showed its gratitude to Muir many times. There are more California sites named after John Muir than after any other person!

Muir sent his messages from the peaks of the Sierra Nevada range, the shade of Sequoia trees, beneath the stars, and beside riverbeds. He gave all Americans some good advice: “Keep close to Nature's heart . . . Break clear away, once in awhile. Climb a mountain or spend a week in a forestland. Wash your spirit clean!”

REFLECT: Think about John Muir and the beauty of nature.

1. Circle the places that are “natural” regions.

a mountain meadow

a new shopping mall

a dry desert

a deep valley

Kennedy Airport

a sparkling waterfall

a college campus

a dark forest

the Grand Canyon

the Florida Everglades

a city library

Central Park