

# Focused Readings



Education

**English** (American)



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### What Is a Folktale?

A **folktale** is an old story that was told by the people of a place. Most folktales were not written down until much later. People shared the stories by telling them to their children. When their children grew, they told the stories to their children.

- Folktales may have animals that talk or act like people.
- Folktales may have magic (something that could not really happen).
- Folktales may have gods or a Creator (someone who makes the world).
- Folktales may explain how something came to be.
- Folktales may explain why something is as it is.
- Folktales may teach an idea that is important to the people of a place.
- Folktales may teach a good way for people to be.



## The Crows Are in the Corn: A Folktale from Georgia

The farmer and his wife worked very hard every day. While the sun still slept they would get out of bed to feed the animals and carry water. They did many tasks under the hot sun. They cleaned the barn where the animals slept. They planted seeds in the garden. They pulled out **weeds** from the **fields** so the corn would have room to grow. When **crows** came, the farmer's wife would wave her broom to shoo them away from the corn. The farmer and his wife worked until the sun went to bed. For twenty years they worked this way and were happy.

One evening after a long day of hard work the farmer said to his wife, "Today I am very tired."

"I am tired, too," said his wife, "It would be so nice to sleep late, just once."

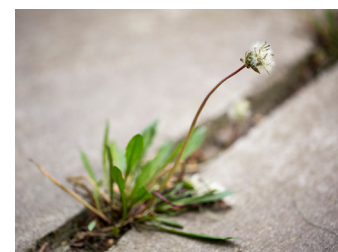
"Let's do that tomorrow," the farmer said, "It will be okay."

The farmer and his wife slept through the sunrise and long past when it was time to feed the animals and make breakfast. The animals in the barn began to worry and make noise. The cows said, "mooooooo!" the goats cried, "baaaaaaaah!" and the rooster sang out, "cock-a-doodle-do!" but the farmer and his wife slept on.

Soon crows began to gather in the apple tree near the cornfield. They saw no farmer with his tractor, and no farmer's wife with her broom.

One crow said, "It looks like the farmer isn't here to guard the corn."

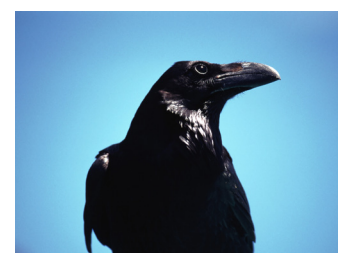
"Yes," said another crow, "and where is the farmer's wife with her broom?"



weeds



field



crow



## The Crows Are in the Corn: A Folktale from Georgia (continued)

"I don't know," said the first crow, "but I'm going to eat some corn."

The crow flew down to the cornfield and started to eat. When nothing happened, more crows flew down, at first eating far from the house, but slowly getting nearer. Now there were hundreds of crows in the corn.

"Oh no!" said the cow, "The crows will eat all the corn!" "We must wake the farmer and his wife!" the rooster said.

The rooster turned toward the sun and began to sing his morning song. Louder and louder he sang to get the farmer and his wife out of bed, but they still didn't wake up.

Now the rooster sang a different song. "The crows are in the corn!" he sang. Still the farmer and his wife slept on. The rooster sang his song louder and louder, but nothing helped.

The animals were very worried. The old **turkey** walked into the yard and looked at the crows in the field. "Oh no," he said. "The crows have eaten all the corn."

And it was true; there was not one **kernel** of corn left in the field. The satisfied crows flew off slowly toward the tall trees of the forest to go sleep.

When at last the farmer and his wife woke up and saw the empty cornfield, they began to cry.

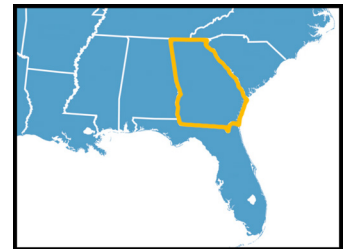
That's why in **Georgia** we say, "The crows are in the corn!" when it's time to get out of bed.



turkey



kernel



Georgia

## “The Crows Are in the Corn: A Folktale from Georgia” - Geography and Culture



Georgia is a state in the southeastern United States. Georgia became a state in 1788. For most of Georgia's history, many people were farmers. They lived on small farms. There was a lot of work to do on a farm. People had to work very hard.

Before the 20th century, many of the people who worked on small farms had very little education. Most could just read and write in a simple way. Telling stories and using spoken language was very important in teaching children how to work on the farms. There were many sayings, folktales, and stories in the culture to help the people remember things that were important.

## "The Crows Are in the Corn" - Reading Questions

Instructions:

- Some questions have answer choices next to the letters A, B, C, and D. Circle the correct answer.
- Other questions have a place for you to write your answer. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. The story says that the farmer and his wife worked very hard. Find *three* sentences in the story that show that they worked hard. Write the sentences.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

2. They cleaned the barn where the animals slept.

What is a barn?

A.



B.



C.



D.



3. When crows came, the farmer's wife would wave her broom to shoo them away from the corn.

What does *wave* mean in this sentence?

- A. to clean or wash something
- B. to find something that is lost
- C. to repair something that is broken
- D. to hold something up so it can be seen

4. *The farmer and his wife worked until the sun went to bed.*

**This means that they worked until**

- A. they were tired.
- B. it was hot outside.
- C. it was dark outside.
- D. they finished their tasks.

5. *While the sun slept they would get out of bed to feed the animals and carry water.*

**This means that they would get out of bed**

- A. in the winter.
- B. in bad weather.
- C. early in the evening.
- D. early in the morning.

6. **Why do the farmer and his wife want to sleep late?**

- A. They are sad.
- B. They are tired.
- C. They do not like to work.
- D. They want to feel like a king and queen.

7. *The farmer and his wife slept through the sunrise and long past when it was time to feed the animals and make breakfast.*

**What does *past* mean in this sentence?**

- A. after
- B. until
- C. before
- D. toward

8. **What do the farm animals do when the farmer and his wife don't arrive to feed them?**

- A. They run away.
- B. They eat the corn.
- C. They try to wake them up.
- D. They tell the crows to come.

9. *Soon crows began to gather in the apple tree near the cornfield. They saw no farmer with his tractor, and no farmer's wife with her broom.*

**What does *gather* mean?**

- A. to cry from sadness
- B. to speak angry words
- C. to come together in one place
- D. to get away from something bad

10. *One crow said, "It looks like the farmer isn't here to guard the corn."  
"Yes," said another crow, "and where is the farmer's wife with her broom?"*

**What does *guard* mean?**

- A. to eat food that is ripe
- B. to grow food from seeds
- C. to watch so that nothing bad comes
- D. to take something that is not yours

11. **As they eat more corn, the crows begin to be**

- A. less afraid.
- B. less happy.
- C. more sorry.
- D. more careful.

12. **As the time gets later, the rooster's singing gets**

- A. sadder.
- B. louder.
- C. more polite.
- D. more beautiful.

13. **How do the husband and his wife feel at the end of the story? Why?**

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**14. PART A. What is the main idea that the story teaches?**

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**PART B. How does the story show this idea?**

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**15. Which idea is most important in this story?**

- A. having fun
- B. working hard
- C. getting enough sleep
- D. helping other people

**16. What does it mean when people say "The crows are in the corn!"?**

- A. It's time to eat!
- B. It's time to get up!
- C. Something bad is here!
- D. There is much work to do!





maple tree



syrup



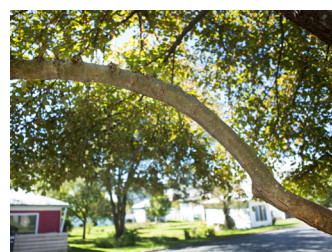
twig



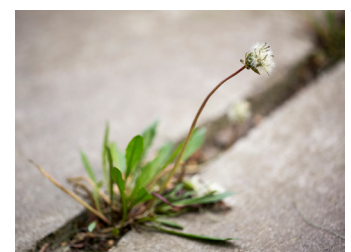
mice



hut



branch



weed

## Gluskabe Changes Maple Syrup: An Abenaki Tale

Long ago the Great Spirit gave many gifts to the Abenaki people. The corn grew tall, the river was full of fish, and the forest was full of animals for meat. One of the best gifts the Great Spirit gave to the people was the **maple tree**. Thick, sweet **syrup** came out of the tree all year long. A person only had to break off any **twig** from the tree and the syrup would come out.

In those days Gluskabe helped the Great Spirit watch over the people. He used to walk from village to village to make sure that the people were well. One day Gluskabe came to a village with no people in it. **Mice** were living in the **huts**. The fires had all gone out. The cornfields were full of **weeds** and birds. Gluskabe wondered, "Where are all the people?"

He walked around but found no one. Then he walked into the forest where he found the people of the village lying half asleep under the maple trees. Broken **branches** dripping with syrup were all around. The people didn't move: They didn't walk, and they didn't work. They were still and heavy from eating so much syrup.

"Get up and go take care of your village!" said Gluskabe.

## Gluskabe Changes Maple Syrup: An Abenaki Tale (continued)

"No, let us lie here," the people said. "We don't want to leave. We don't want to do anything. We only want to sleep and drink syrup."

Gluskabe went to the Great Spirit to tell him the news. The Great Spirit was not happy to hear that the people were taking his gifts for granted. It was time for them to remember how he wanted them to be.

"Go fill the maple trees with water," the Great Spirit told Gluskabe.

So Gluskabe made a bucket out of tree **bark** and went to the river to get some water. He came back to the maple tree and poured the water into its **trunk**. Gluskabe filled the bucket many times, one time for each day between two round moons. When he was done, the syrup in the tree had become a **sap** as thin as water.

Now the people became lighter because the syrup they drank was not so thick and sweet. They began to get up and walk around. "Where has our sweet syrup gone?" they asked.

"From now on," said Gluskabe, "it won't come so easily. The sap will only come in the spring time of the year," said Gluskabe, "and you'll have to work hard to turn it into a thick, sweet syrup."

"First you will need to make buckets from tree bark," Gluskabe told the people. "Then use a knife to make a small cut in the trunk of the tree. When the sap comes out, catch it in the buckets. Then you will have to make a large fire. You will need to carry many **stones** from the river and put them in the fire. You will need to cook the sap over the hot stones until all the water is gone. Only then will you will have thick, sweet syrup. You will need 40 buckets of sap to make just one bucket of syrup."

"And do not wait too long," said Gluskabe, "for once flowers grow on the tree, the sap will have a sour taste. Then there will be no more syrup until the next year."

Before he turned to go, Gluskabe said, "Remember that you did not take care of the gifts you were given. Now you will have to work hard to have a little of what the Great Spirit once gave you freely."

The people were sad, but they knew that Gluskabe was right. It was time for them to take care of the gifts the Great Spirit gave them.

And so each spring as they go out into the forest to make maple syrup, the Abenaki people remember this story and what they were taught by the Great Spirit.



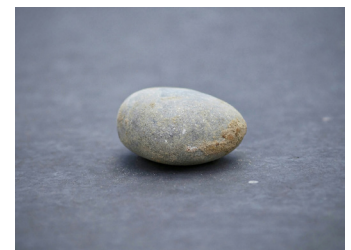
bark



trunk



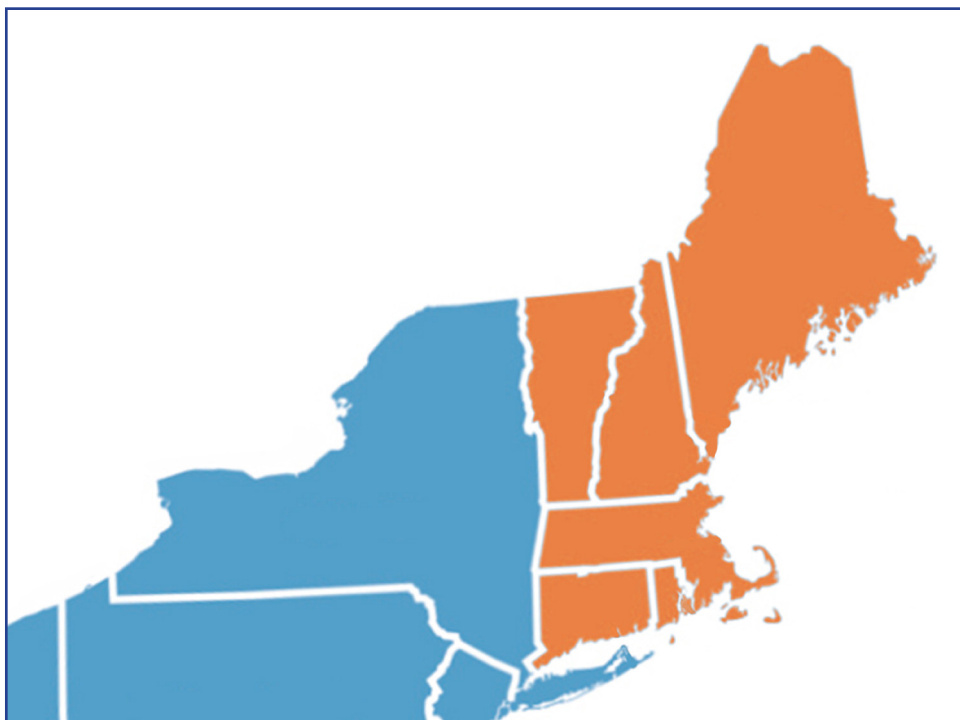
sap



stone



## “Gluskabe Changes Maple Syrup: An Abenaki Tale” - Geography and Culture



The Abenaki people were already living in North America when explorers from Europe arrived in the 1400s. The Abenaki people lived in the place that is now called New England. New England has six states: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Many Abenaki people still live in New England today.

New England has many maple trees and birch trees. The Abenaki people made things from these trees. They made sweet maple syrup from the sap of the maple trees. They used the bark of the birch trees to make boats, baskets, and the huts they lived in.

Stories have always been very important for the Abenaki people. The Abenaki people tell stories to teach their children how to live well. Two characters are in many Abenaki stories. One of these is the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit made everything in life. The other character is Gluskabe. Gluskabe helps and teaches the people.

## "Gluskabe Changes Maple Syrup: An Abenaki Tale" - Reading Questions

1. What gifts did the Great Spirit give to the people? Write *four* different gifts.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is Gluskabe's job?

- A. to make gifts for the people
- B. to give ideas to the Great Spirit
- C. to show the people where to find food
- D. to help the Great Spirit watch the people

3. *He used to walk from village to village to make sure that the people were well.*

**A *village* is probably a place where**

- A. there are many tall buildings.
- B. people go when they are sick.
- C. farmers sell the food they grow.
- D. there are many homes together.

4. **A *cornfield* is a place where corn is**

- A. sold.
- B. eaten.
- C. grown.
- D. cooked.

5. Gluskabe came to a village with no people in it. How do you know that the people had been gone for a long time?

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6. Why are the people under the trees not walking or moving?

- A. They are too full of syrup.
- B. They are tired from working hard.
- C. They are trying to catch animals for meat.
- D. They are hoping Gluskabe does not see them.

7. *Gluskabe filled the bucket many times, one time for each day between two round moons.*

Probably how many times did Gluskabe fill the bucket?

- A. 7
- B. 30
- C. 100
- D. 365

8. How is the sap different from the syrup?

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9. Why do the people get up from the forest floor?

- A. They are not tired anymore.
- B. They want to please Gluskabe.
- C. They are sorry for not working.
- D. They are afraid of the Great Spirit.

10. How do the people feel when Gluskabe tells them what will be different?

- A. They are sorry for what they did.
- B. They are worried about their syrup.
- C. They are angry with the Great Spirit.
- D. They are surprised to learn the news.

11. Write the correct information in the empty boxes.

	Before Gluskabe finds them	After Gluskabe finds them
How do the people get maple syrup?		
When can the people get maple syrup?		

12. PART A. What is the main idea that the story teaches?

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PART B. How does the story show this idea?

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Your Writing: Thinking about the Folktales

Answer the questions. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. How are the farmer and his wife ("The Crows are in the Corn") *different* from the people Gluskabe sees ("Gluskabe Changes Maple Syrup")?

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2. Think about the main idea in each story. Which idea do you agree with more? Why?

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3. Think about the people you know. What are their ideas about work? How are their ideas the same or different from the ideas in the stories?

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### What Is a Narrative?

A **narrative** is a story that is told or written. The **voice** saying the story is called **the narrator**. The narrator is *not* the same as the person who made the story. That person is called the **author**. The author is always a real person. The author is the real person who wrote the story. The person who writes the story (author) can make any kind of voice (narrator) to tell the story.

Narratives have **characters**. They are the people in the story. What the characters say and do helps the reader know how the characters feel (for example, if they are sad, happy, afraid, worried, angry, embarrassed, or surprised). Characters might have different feelings at different times in the story.

Sometimes a character in a story is also the narrator. The character's voice tells the story. A narrator who is also a character in the story uses the words "I" and "we" to tell the story. A story that is told by one of the characters is called a **first-person narrative**.

Narratives have one or more **settings**. The setting is *when* and *where* the story happens. Anything about the time or the place of the story is part of the setting. A story can have more than one setting. The setting can become different in different parts of the story.

- The main setting of "Night on the Mountain" is Santa Fe, New Mexico in the 1950s.
- The time of day can also be part of the setting. "Night on the Mountain" has different times of day in it.
- The weather can also be part of the setting. In "Night on the Mountain," the weather is different in different parts of the story.
- The setting can also be the different places the characters go in the story. In "Night on the Mountain," the characters go from their home to the mountain. Then they return home again.

In some narratives, the setting is very important. Sometimes the setting has to do with what happens in the story. Sometimes the setting has to do with how the characters feel. As you read "Night on the Mountain," ask yourself:

What does the setting have to do with the characters' feelings in this story?

A narrative often has a main idea. This is the big idea that the reader understands from reading the story.



## The Night on the Mountain By Jaime Núñez

(1) When I was a boy, you see, things were a lot different. What's that? The Old West? No, child, it wasn't that long ago. I'm not *that* old, you know. No, it was the 1950s, and I tell you, things were different than they are today. Children played on their own. The fathers were out working, and the mothers were home, but they were still busy. Not pushing their children on **swings** like they do today, not driving them to soccer practice or dance class. No, in those days, the mothers cooked and cleaned and had coffee with the other mothers. We kids went where we liked, exploring places that only we knew about. Sometimes we were out all day. As long as we were home for dinner it was okay. What's that? No, no, we weren't afraid. No, as I say, times were different back then.

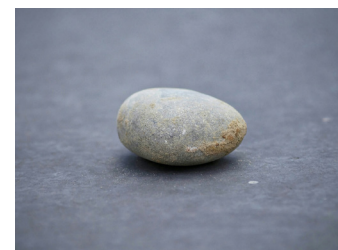
(2) Some days Jake and I would ride our bicycles way out past the city. Today the city runs all the way to the mountains, but it didn't then. In those days Santa Fe was only a little town, and everyone knew everyone else. We would explore the woods outside the town looking for ancient things in the dirt and **stones**. The woods were full of birds and animals back then, too. And Jake, he knew the names of everything. "Listen," he would say, getting quiet. "You hear that bird? That's a canyon wren."

(3) One day Jake said, "Sam, let's climb those mountains." Of course, Jake never needed to try to get me to agree. Almost anything he said, I would do.

(4) The next morning we got up while it was still dark. While our parents slept, we made cheese sandwiches and put them in a backpack along with apples, **peanuts**, and a **canteen** of water. We went out the door quietly. In the dark we rode our bicycles all the way to the mountain and left them beside the **road**.



swing



stone



peanut



canteen



road



## The Night on the Mountain (continued)

(5) We began climbing just as the sky was beginning to turn a warm pink color. We were happy to be young, happy to have the whole day before us. In the morning light, we could see little diamonds of water on the leaves of the plants. The air was full of the songs of birds, and it smelled sweet and spicy from the pine trees. Now the sun began to warm our **backs** and slowly the sky turned a beautiful blue, with lots of pretty little white clouds. We had fun looking for pictures in those clouds. There was an elephant, I remember, and a flying horse, I think. A sailboat, too. As we climbed, we told each other the things we would do when we grew bigger. Then we got hungry and sat down to eat our lunch.



back

(6) After that, we kept going, but the climbing began to get more difficult. There were many stones in our way. The sun was getting very hot, and the air had become still. We could hear the loud humming of insects. Our shirts were wet from sweat, and Jake's face was red; mine probably was, too. My feet hurt and I wanted to go home, but Jake said, "Just a little farther, Sam. Let's see if we can get to the top." We drank some more water and kept climbing.



shadow

(7) As we climbed higher the clouds grew dark and became a heavy blanket across the sky. We could see that it was going to rain, maybe a lot. Now even Jake thought we should go back, so we turned around and started walking back down the mountain, to try to get home before the storm broke. After a long while, we were not where we thought we should be. We had taken a trail that seemed to go down, but then it began to go back up the mountain. Many times we went back to try a different way, but we were lost. We were tired and thirsty, and all our water was gone.



leaves

(8) The clouds made dark **shadows** over the trees, and then night came and it got even darker. Something was rustling the **leaves** near us. We heard cries that we didn't recognize. I thought about how our mother would be serving dinner right about now. I started to cry.



magician

(9) "Say, look what I found!" said Jake, his face in a wide smile. Like a **magician** he pulled a small slice of cake, wrapped in plastic, out of his pocket. "I forgot I had this. For you, Sam." I ate the sweet treat and forgot to be afraid for a little while.



monster

(10) The rain came, slow at first, but then fast and strong. The sky lit up and roared like an angry **monster**. Jake said we should make a fort to stay there for the night. We gathered **sticks** and leaves and made a shelter as best we could. Jake made the canteen stand between two stones so that the rain could go in it. We sat close together as the wind howled in the trees.



stick



## The Night on the Mountain (continued)

(11) Finally the rain stopped and the wind quieted down. We could hear water falling from the trees. "Isn't this fun?" said Jake, "I think we should go camping every night! Listen! *Who-who-who*. That's a **spotted owl**." Jake seemed to be having a good time. Only later did I learn that he was afraid, too.



spotted owl

(12) We brushed away small stones to make our bed. We were wet and cold and hungry. To help me feel better, Jake told me stories. As hungry as I was, I was even more tired. I was soon sleeping. We slept hugging each other to stay warm.

(13) When we woke up the next morning, we were very sore, but the day was clear and beautiful like it was the first day of the world. We could see all the way down to Santa Fe.

(14) "Look at that," said Jake. "I think I can see our house!"

(15) We made it back to our bicycles and rode home. As we rode up our street we saw police cars at our house. Oh, yes, child, we were in trouble. But it wasn't too bad, not as bad as we thought it would be. Jake got the worst of it for being the oldest. But our parents were mostly very happy to see us. We had to promise never to do that again. And we never did.

(16) But as time went by, I began to remember different things about that night on the mountain: The stars that watched me when I woke up once in the middle of the night. The fresh, sweet smell of the rain in the pines. The quiet music of the wind as it sang its long goodbye. Mostly, though, I remember Jake, and how his face was smiling like everything was going to be okay.

(17) Six years later Jake went away and never came home. He became a soldier, and they sent him overseas. His sergeant said he died saving three of his buddies.

(18) It's a funny thing. That night on the mountain with my brother, I was afraid and cold and hungry. But as I got older that night became very important to me—more precious than diamonds. No, I wouldn't trade that night on the mountain for anything in the world.

## "The Night on the Mountain" - Reading Questions

Instructions:

- Some questions have answer choices next to the letters A, B, C, and D. Circle the correct answer.
- Other questions have a place for you to write your answer. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

**1. Who is the narrator of the story?**

- A. the author
- B. Sam the child
- C. Jake the child
- D. Sam the old man

**2. The narrator is telling the story to**

- A. a child.
- B. his mother.
- C. a police officer.
- D. his adult brother.

**3. When do Jake and Sam begin to climb the mountain?**

- A. at noon
- B. at sunset
- C. at sunrise
- D. at midnight

**4. The narrator says that when Sam and Jake begin to climb they feel happy.**

**Read paragraph 5. How does the setting help show they are happy? Write *three* things about the setting that show their happy feelings.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The narrator says that the climbing gets more difficult.

Read paragraph 6. What information shows that it is difficult? Write *three* things that show the climbing is difficult.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Read paragraph 7. Why do Jake and Sam think that it will rain?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Read paragraph 8. How does Sam feel when night comes? Which words help you know this?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Read this sentence from paragraph 9.

*Like a magician* he pulled a small slice of cake, wrapped in plastic, out of his pocket.

Jake is “like a magician” because he

- A. is very good at climbing.
- B. makes a good surprise for Sam.
- C. knows what will happen in the future.
- D. does not show Sam what he is thinking.

9. Read this sentence from paragraph 11.

*“Isn’t this fun?” said Jake. “I think we should go camping every night!”*

Why does Jake say this?

- A. He loves the rain.
- B. He loves to go camping.
- C. He wants Sam to feel good.
- D. He wants Sam to stay awake.

10. Read this part of paragraph 13.

... the day was clear and beautiful like it was the first day of the world.

“Like it was the first day of the world” means that the day was

- A. cold and wet.
- B. fresh and new.
- C. warm and windy.
- D. empty and boring.

11. How does Jake help Sam in the story? Write two things Jake does to help Sam. Write how they help Sam.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

12. How is the setting different in different parts of the story? How do the characters feel in those parts of the story? Put the right information in the empty boxes.

Part of the Story	Setting	Characters' Feelings
when Jake and Sam begin climbing (paragraph 5)		
when the climbing becomes more difficult (paragraph 6)		
when Jake and Sam try to go back down the mountain (paragraph 7)		
when night comes (paragraph 8)		
during the rain storm (paragraph 10)		
when they wake up the next day (paragraph 13)		

**13. Read these sentences from paragraph 16.**

*But as time went by, I began to remember different things about that night on the mountain: The stars that watched me when I woke up once in the middle of the night. The fresh, sweet smell of the rain in the pines. The quiet music of the wind as it sang its long goodbye.*

**How are these things *different* from what the narrator remembers in paragraphs 8 and 10?**

- A. They are funny instead of boring.
- B. They are beautiful instead of scary.
- C. They are dangerous instead of fun.
- D. They are real instead of being a dream.

**14. Read this sentence from paragraph 16.**

*Mostly, though, I remember Jake, and how his face was smiling like everything was going to be okay.*

**Why do you think the narrator remembers this most?**

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**15. In the last paragraph, the narrator says the night on the mountain became very important to him. Why did that night become so important to the narrator? Write about it.**

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### What Is a Poem?

A **narrative** is a story.

A **poem** is writing that uses very little language to mean a lot. A poem does not use as many words as a story, but each word is important. In a poem, some words may have more than one meaning. Poems are like spoken music because they have **rhythm**.

- The person who writes the poem is called the **poet**.
- The voice speaking in a poem is called the **speaker of the poem** or the **speaker**. The speaker of the poem is *not* the same as the poet. The person who writes the poem (poet) can make any kind of voice (speaker) for the poem. The person who writes the poem can make the poem have the voice of anything—another person, an animal, a car, the moon, etc. The speaker of the poem can be any person or any thing. One poet may write many poems. Each poem may have a different speaker, but the poet is always the same person.
- In a poem, each group of words that goes from left to right on the page is called a **line**.
- Poems may use words that **rhyme**. Words rhyme if they end with the same sounds. *Cat* and *hat* are words that rhyme. *Outside* and *tried* also rhyme.



stretch



leaves



butterfly

## Yesterday and Today By Monica Tan

### Yesterday

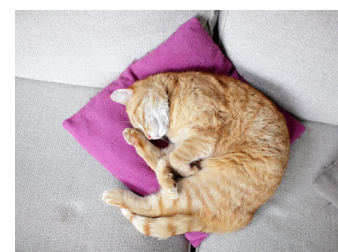
the morning bird sings—  
we open our eyes  
we **stretch** and rise  
like the sun  
jumping out of bed to dress  
as fast as we can  
we run across the tall grass  
scattering small animals  
we chase purple **butterflies**  
the wind laughs with us  
and tangles our hair  
it makes the **leaves** dance  
we pick white flowers  
their seeds fly in the air  
before they come down  
one day they too will grow  
into beauties  
at night  
we sit under the sky  
we share our dreams with the stars  
they **wink** and smile at us

### Today

The round clock rings—  
Sun and songbird  
To my days.  
It rings again. I should get up.  
I get dressed as fast as I can;  
I have to run to catch the bus.  
I chase the day's tasks  
As a cat chases its tail  
Round and round  
As minutes chase hours  
And months chase years.  
At night  
I sit with the television  
Like a cat **curled up**  
After a good dinner  
While the wind outside  
Sings a lonely song  
Of dreams scattered  
Like **mice** in the grass;  
Of hopes lost in the wind  
Like seeds that won't grow.



wink



curled up



mice



## "Yesterday and Today" - Reading Questions

1. Look at the two parts of the poem.

Part A. What wakes up the speaker in "Yesterday"?

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Part B. What wakes up the speaker in "Today"?

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2. Which words from "Yesterday" rhyme?

- A. *eyes* and *rise*
- B. *sun* and *can*
- C. *dress* and *grass*
- D. *night* and *sky*

3. Which words from "Yesterday" rhyme?

- A. *animals* and *butterflies*
- B. *down* and *grow*
- C. *hair* and *air*
- D. *flowers* and *beauties*

4. PART A. Read these lines from "Yesterday."

*we stretch and rise  
like the sun*

What does it mean to say that the children in the poem "stretch"?

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PART B. What does it mean to say that the sun "stretches"?

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5. PART A. What does it mean to say that the children "rise"?

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PART B. Think about a word you know: *sunrise*. What does it mean to say that the sun "rises"?

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6. Read these lines from "Yesterday."

*jumping out of bed to dress  
as fast as we can*

What do these lines tell you about the children?

- A. They are still very tired.
- B. They have a lot of work to do.
- C. They are happy to start their day.
- D. They are worried they might be late.

7. Read these lines from "Yesterday."

*the wind laughs with us  
and tangles our hair  
it makes the leaves dance*

In *the wind laughs with us*, "the wind" is most like a

- A. toy.
- B. cat.
- C. friend.
- D. teacher.

8. Instead of writing that the wind blows the leaves, the poet wrote that the wind "makes the leaves dance." What did the poet want to show?

- A. The day is beautiful and fun.
- B. The weather is getting worse.
- C. It is almost time to return home.
- D. Winter is gone and spring is here.

9. Read these lines from "Yesterday."

*we pick white flowers  
their seeds fly in the air  
before they come down  
one day they too will grow  
into beauties*

In these lines, how are the seeds of the white flowers like the children?

- A. They are not ready to start living yet.
- B. They will become something different.
- C. They have no power over where they go.
- D. They will travel far from where they are now.

10. Read these lines from "Yesterday."

*we share our dreams with the stars  
they wink and smile at us*

In these lines, the stars are most like

- A. nice people.
- B. little animals.
- C. an interesting book.
- D. a beautiful painting.

11. Read these lines from "Today."

*The round clock rings—  
Sun and songbird  
To my days.*

PART A. How is the clock like the sun?

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PART B. How is the clock like a songbird?

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12. Read this line from "Today."  
*It rings again. I should get up.*

The word "should" tells you that the speaker

- A. likes morning best.
- B. is hungry for breakfast.
- C. would prefer to stay in bed.
- D. does not know what time it is.

13. Why does the speaker get dressed fast?
- 

14. Read these lines from "Today."  
*I chase the day's tasks  
As a cat chases its tail  
Round and round*

These lines tell you that the work of the day

- A. is difficult.
- B. has no end.
- C. begins early.
- D. is a fun game.

15. Read these lines from "Today."  
*I chase the day's tasks  
As a cat chases its tail  
Round and round  
As minutes chase hours  
And months chase years.*

What do these lines tell you about the speaker's life?

- A. The speaker's past was a happy time.
- B. The speaker likes to plan for the future.
- C. Time goes by fast because the days are fun.
- D. Time is passing without anything new happening.

16. What are the two different parts of the poem about?

- A. day and night
- B. summer and winter
- C. being a child and being an adult
- D. an ancient century and a modern century

17. Read these lines from the two parts of the poem.

*"Yesterday"*  
*at night*  
*we sit under the sky*  
*we share our dreams with the stars*  
*they wink and smile at us*

*"Today"*  
*At night*  
*I sit with the television*  
*Like a cat curled up*  
*After a good dinner*

How is night the same or different for the speaker in the two parts of the poem?  
Write the information in the empty boxes.

At night...	in "Yesterday"	in "Today"
Where is the speaker?		
Who is with the speaker?		
What is the speaker doing?		
How does the speaker feel at night? Which words help you know this?		

18. PART A. "The wind" is in both parts of the poem. What does the wind do in each part?

In "Yesterday": \_\_\_\_\_

In "Today": \_\_\_\_\_

PART B. What feelings does the speaker have about the wind in each part?

In "Yesterday": \_\_\_\_\_

In "Today": \_\_\_\_\_

19. "Seeds" are in both parts of the poem. What does the speaker say about the seeds in each part of the poem?

In "Yesterday": \_\_\_\_\_

In "Today": \_\_\_\_\_

20. The words "run" and "chase" are in both parts of the poem. How is the running and the chasing *different* in each part of the poem? Which words help you know? Write about it.

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21. What is the poem “Yesterday and Today” about? What is the main idea of the poem? How do the two parts of the poem show you the main idea? Write about it.

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## Your Writing: Thinking about the Narrative and Poem

Answer the questions. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. The poem ("Yesterday and Today") and the story ("Night on the Mountain") are both about *remembering* the past.

Write about the speaker of the poem and the narrator of the narrative. Write about how each one remembers the past. Write about how each one feels about the past. Use information from the poem and the narrative to help show what you mean.

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2. Write about a time in the past that you remember well. What were your feelings at the time? Did your feelings become different later? Write about them.

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3. Write your own short poem about the past.

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### What Is an Argumentative Essay?

An **essay** is writing that tells a person's thoughts or ideas about something. An essay is usually a short piece of writing (not as many pages as a book).

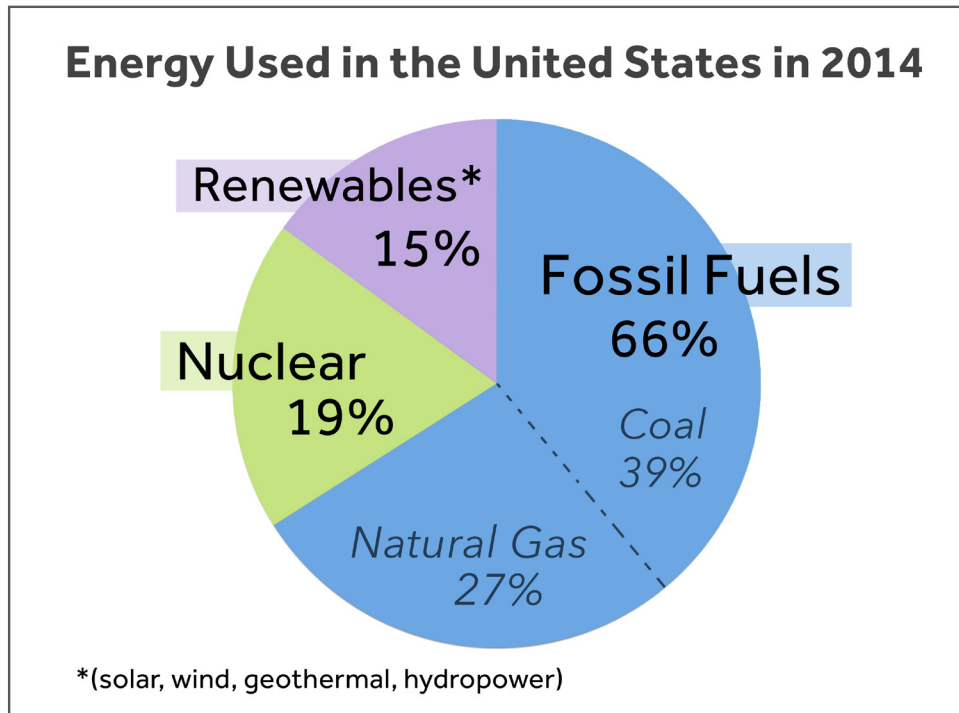
One type of essay is called an **argumentative essay**. In an argumentative essay, the writer makes an **argument**. An argument is saying what you believe (your **opinion**) and why you believe it (your **reasons**). In an argumentative essay, the writer tries to **persuade** readers to agree with his or her opinions. To *persuade* means to give someone good reasons and information so they will agree with you.

In an argumentative essay, a writer makes **claims**. A claim is something that you say is true. "Vegetables are good for you" is a claim. "Sugar is bad for you" is also a claim. A very important part of any argument is **evidence**. Evidence is the information a writer gives to show readers why they should believe the writer's claim. For example, if a writer makes the claim "Vegetables are good for you," the writer might give evidence to show why readers should believe this claim. To give evidence, the writer might talk about a study by scientists in which people who ate more vegetables did not get sick as much as people who ate almost no vegetables. Or, the writer might give evidence about himself. He might say that after he started eating more vegetables, he was able to run faster. The writer might give the evidence that in countries where people eat mostly vegetables, almost no one gets some types of sicknesses.

Has the writer persuaded you to agree that school lunches should have more vegetables?



## The Energy Debate - Fossil Fuels vs. Renewables



We use energy to make electricity. Electricity is important in homes, stores, offices, businesses, and schools. We use it to power machines and computers, to make light, and to make the temperature inside warmer or colder.

In the United States, we get most of our energy by burning *fossil fuels*. Fossil fuels are ancient matter inside the earth. Fossil fuels are from animals and plants that died millions of years ago. Coal, oil, and natural gas are fossil fuels. People say there are two problems with using fossil fuels for energy. The first problem is that we have used fossil fuels so much that they will soon run out. The second problem is that burning fossil fuels makes dangerous gases. Scientists say that these gases will soon make it more difficult for many plants, animals, and people to live.

Because of these two problems, some people are talking about "clean," *renewable energy*, sometimes called "green power." Renewable energy is energy that will not run out. Energy that comes from the sun (*solar*) or wind is *renewable* because there will always be enough sun and wind. Renewable energy can also come from moving water (*hydroelectric*) or from the hot temperatures inside the earth (*geothermal*). Renewable energy is also called "clean" energy because it does not make dangerous gases. There are some problems with renewable energy, though. We are still learning how to get renewable energy. We do not have as much practice with it as we have with fossil fuels. Scientists are still trying to make renewable energy work better and be less expensive.



## Why We Still Need Coal

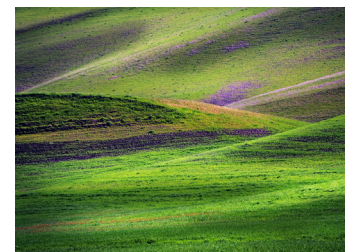
(1) These days, a lot of people like to talk about the problems that come from using coal to produce energy. They say that burning coal makes the air and water dirty and makes people sick. They say that it puts too much CO<sub>2</sub> into the air and that this is making the **planet** warmer, which will bring problems in the future. However, not many people have really thought about what would happen if we stopped using coal. If we really did stop using coal, not many people would be happy about it.

(2) First, it is important to know that we can make coal cleaner. "Clean coal" puts almost no CO<sub>2</sub> into the air. To make clean coal, power plants use what is called Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). Before the dangerous gases from burning coal (such as CO<sub>2</sub>) go into the air, the CCS catches them. The dangerous gases are then put away deep under the **ground** or deep into the ocean. CCS can catch 80-90% of all the CO<sub>2</sub> that comes from burning coal and make sure it doesn't get into the air.

(3) So why would most people be unhappy if we stopped using coal? For one thing, energy prices would be very high. Coal is much less expensive than most other types of power. A 2011 study by the Brookings Institution found that it cost only about 3.2 **cents** per kilowatt-hour to produce coal power in today's coal plants. The study said it cost about 4.9 cents to produce natural gas. It said it would cost about 8.6 cents to produce **wind** power, and about 11.8 cents to produce power from the sun.\* The extra costs from using other kinds power instead of coal would be passed on to everyone. If energy gets more expensive, then everything will be more expensive. Not only will people have to pay higher energy bills at home, but businesses will have higher energy bills, too. Then they



planet



ground



cent



wind

## Why We Still Need Coal (continued)

will have to charge their customers more to make up for it. Many people in the United States are already having a hard time putting food on the table for their families. They cannot work any harder, and they cannot pay any more than they are already paying to live. They need energy prices to stay low.

(4) There is another important reason why the United States should keep using coal, and it may surprise you. If the United States stopped using coal, there would be more dirty air and more dangerous CO<sub>2</sub>, not less. Here is the reason why: Any coal the United States doesn't use, it will sell to other countries, like China and India. As long as coal is less expensive than other kinds of power, other countries will buy coal from the United States. Very few of these countries have laws that are as good as United States laws for keeping the air and water clean. The countries buying coal from the United States will not build plants for clean coal like the United States. That means that while the United States might make less dirty air and CO<sub>2</sub>, other countries would make much more. The large ships needed to transport the coal to other countries would make the air and water even dirtier. If we don't want more CO<sub>2</sub> going into the air, then we should keep as much coal power production as possible inside the United States.

(5) Finally, about 1/4 of the world's coal is in the United States. We have enough coal in the ground to make energy for more than 200 years. We do not need to buy it from other countries. This large amount of coal makes our country safer because we do not have to depend on any other countries to get our energy. We can always make our own.

(6) For all of these reasons, coal is still the best way for us to produce power in the United States. Of course, it is still a good idea for scientists to study better ways to make energy from the sun and the wind. In the future, scientists may learn to make energy that is both less expensive and cleaner than even clean coal. However, that time is still far in the future. For now, coal is the best energy for our country.

## “Why We Still Need Coal” - Reading Questions

Instructions:

- Some questions have answer choices next to the letters A, B, C, and D. Circle the correct answer.
- Other questions have a place for you to write your answer. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. **PART A.** In paragraph 1, the writer talks about people who do not agree that we should use coal. What does the writer say their worries are about coal? Write *three* of their worries.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B.** How does the writer answer these people’s worries about coal? What does the writer say in the essay to show them that using coal is better instead of worse? Write *two* claims the writer makes to answer people’s worries about coal.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. **What is Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)? What is it for and what does it do? Write your answers.**

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3. **Read this claim from paragraph 2.**

*We can make coal cleaner.*

**Which sentence does the writer use as evidence for this claim?**

- A. If we really did stop using coal, not many people would be happy about it.
- B. “Clean coal” puts almost no CO<sub>2</sub> in the air.
- C. CCS can catch 80-90% of all the CO<sub>2</sub> that comes from burning coal and make sure it doesn’t go into the air.
- D. Countries buying coal from the United States will not build plants for clean coal like the United States.

**4. Read these sentences from paragraph 3.**

*So why would most people be unhappy if we stopped using coal? For one thing, energy prices would be very high.*

**What evidence does the writer give to show that energy prices would be higher if we stopped using coal?**

- A. the words of a government officer
- B. the words of a coal plant worker
- C. information from a study by scientists
- D. information from the writer's own energy bills

**5. Read these sentences from paragraph 3.**

*Many people in the United States are already having a hard time putting food on the table for their families. They cannot work any harder, and they cannot pay any more than they are already paying to live. They need energy prices to stay low.*

**In the sentence above, *low* means**

- A. quiet.
- B. simple.
- C. unhappy.
- D. inexpensive.

**6. Read these sentences from paragraph 3.**

*Many people in the United States are already having a hard time putting food on the table for their families. They cannot work any harder, and they cannot pay any more than they are already paying to live. They need energy prices to stay low.*

**What does the writer want the reader to understand by reading these sentences?**

- A. There are a lot of people who will not be able to live well if we stop using coal.
- B. Coal is still too expensive and needs to be made cheaper.
- C. Most people in the United States do not think there are problems with coal.
- D. There is enough coal in the United States if families use only what they need.

**7. Read these sentences from paragraph 4.**

*If we don't want more CO<sub>2</sub> going into the air, then we should keep as much coal power production as possible inside the United States.*

**What does *production* mean?**

- A. getting money for selling something
- B. talking that has many people disagreeing
- C. studying something that is difficult to understand
- D. making something for many people to use or buy

**8. Read the last paragraph of the essay.**

*For all of these reasons, coal is still the best way for us to produce power in the United States. Of course, it is still a good idea for scientists to study better ways to make energy from the sun and the wind. In the future, scientists may learn to make energy that is both less expensive and cleaner than even clean coal. However, that time is still far in the future. For now, coal is the best energy for our country.*

**Think about the underlined sentence. What does this sentence do in the paragraph?**

- A. It makes the essay more fun and interesting for people to read.
- B. It helps the writer be nice to people who disagree with the writer's ideas.
- C. It shows that the writer is not sure that coal is the best way to make energy.
- D. It helps readers remember that science is an important answer to the problem.

**9. Below is an *outline* of the essay. An outline is used to understand an essay better. It tells what the main ideas and the smaller ideas of the essay are. This outline has a special kind of number, called a Roman numeral ("I-VI"), for each of the six paragraphs of the essay "Why We Still Need Coal."**

**Do the parts of the outline that are not finished. On the empty lines after the Roman numerals, write the main idea of the paragraph. On the empty lines after the letters ("A" and "B") write smaller ideas in the paragraph that help to tell about the main idea.**

I. Many people say there are problems with coal, but they would not be happy if we stopped using coal.

A. \_\_\_\_\_.

B. \_\_\_\_\_.

II. We can make clean coal.

A. \_\_\_\_\_.

B. \_\_\_\_\_.

III. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. Coal is the least expensive type of energy.

B. \_\_\_\_\_.

IV. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. \_\_\_\_\_.

B. \_\_\_\_\_.

V. We have enough coal, so we do not need to get it from other countries.

A. \_\_\_\_\_.

B. \_\_\_\_\_.

VI. \_\_\_\_\_.

A. \_\_\_\_\_.

B. Energy from the sun and wind will not be ready for many years.



10. What do you think is the writer's best reason for why we should use coal? Write what the reason is. Then write why you think it is the best.

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11. What do you think is the writer's worst reason for why we should use coal? Write what the reason is. Then write why you think it is the worst.

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12. Read paragraph 5 of the essay.

*Finally, about 1/4 of the world's coal is in the United States. We have enough coal in the ground to make energy for more than 200 years. We do not need to buy it from other countries. This large amount of coal makes our country safer because we do not have to depend on any other countries to get our energy. We can always make our own.*

In this paragraph, the writer says that the large amount of coal in the United States makes the country safer. Does the writer give a reason or evidence for this claim? If so, what reason or evidence does the writer give? Do you think the reason or evidence is good enough? Why or why not? Write your answers.

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## Green Power

(1) "Green power" is a type of energy that can be produced without polluting the air with CO<sub>2</sub> and other dangerous gases. Green power is **clean** power. Green power is more than a nice idea. It is something we need very badly. We are living at a very important and difficult time in history. We have to do something different from what we have been doing. We have to stop burning coal, oil, and gas. They are making our planet very sick by giving it a fever that is getting higher very fast. Green power is the only medicine that will work to bring down the fever. It is the only way we can leave our children and grandchildren with any hope for the future.

(2) Since 1880, the **earth** has been getting hotter because our industries and factories have put too much CO<sub>2</sub> into the air. The CO<sub>2</sub> stays in the air and won't let hot air from the sun leave the earth. Because the earth's temperature today is higher, there is less ice and snow on Earth than there was 50 years ago. The ice that is left is melting into the ocean, making the oceans fill higher with water. Today the ocean water is 8 inches higher than it was a century ago. This is already creating problems. People from the Tuvalu islands in the South Pacific Ocean had to move away from their home because it was flooded with ocean water. Scientists say these islands may soon be completely under water. Scientists think that if we don't stop putting CO<sub>2</sub> into the air, much more ice will melt, and then the oceans will flood many cities in many places. The warmer temperature on Earth is also creating weather that is stronger and more dangerous. All these things are making it harder for many plants and animals to live. Scientists think that by the end of the 21st century, 70% of the different types of plants and animals on Earth will be gone. We are leaving a dead garden to the children of the future.



earth

## Green Power (continued)

(3) When did all these problems start? They started when industries began burning large amounts of coal at the end of the 19th century. Today, a third of all the CO<sub>2</sub> put into the air by people is from burning coal. Scientists say that if we want to avoid the worst problems, we have to put 50% less CO<sub>2</sub> into the air by 2020. We can only do this if we stop burning coal.

(4) Coal creates many more problems than just warming the earth. It pollutes the air and makes people and animals sick. It is bad for the workers who work in the coalmines and often do not live as long as other people. Getting coal out of the **ground** is very dangerous and creates many problems. In some states, coal companies mine coal by taking whole mountains down. **West Virginia** once had many beautiful mountains that are now just dirt and **rocks**. The trees and animals are gone from these places. The high mountain rivers are gone, and instead the water has flooded people's homes. The dirt from the mountains has gone into lower rivers and polluted the drinking water, making it unsafe for both people and animals.

(5) With all these problems, why do we still get our energy from coal? Coal companies tell us that green power is too expensive. They say that coal is much cheaper than any other kind of power. However, they are wrong. The money that people spend on their energy bills is not the whole cost of coal. The only reason coal is cheap is because the coal industry has very few laws that stop it from hurting the planet. The coal industry does not have to pay for the problems that come from burning coal. They do not have to pay the doctors' bills that people pay when they get sick from polluted air. They do not have to pay to clean up the rivers and oceans. They do not have to pay for weather problems. Although the coal companies don't have to pay for these problems, people do. These costs are all part of the real price of coal.

(6) If we add all these costs to the price of coal, then green power is less expensive than coal. For example, if we add the costs that other people will have to pay later, then coal really costs not 3.2 **cents** per kilowatt-hour, but 8.8 cents. This is more than the cost of **wind** power from new plants, which is only 8.6 cents. While solar power is still more expensive at 11.8 cents, the costs of getting usable energy from the sun are beginning to decrease.

(7) What about "clean coal"? Coal companies say that they can wash the dangerous gases and chemicals out of the coal and keep them out of the air using a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) system. The "clean coal" that you hear about in newspapers and on television is something that makes coal easier for people to like, but it has not really made coal any cleaner. While CCS is a future hope of the industry, it will not be ready until 2030. The **planet** cannot wait that long for "clean coal."



ground



West Virginia



cent



rock



wind



planet

## Green Power (continued)

(8) Also, building new clean coal plants will make coal much more expensive. Coal power from new plants will cost more because it is expensive to build these plants. Coal power from new plants will cost 11.5 cents per kilowatt-hour. This is more than wind power and almost as much as solar power. By the time the new clean coal plants are built, solar power will have become much less expensive. The longer we have green power plants, the cheaper green power will become. With coal, the longer we have it, the more expensive it will become, as the problems it creates get bigger and bigger.

(9) In the long run, green power is cheaper because it doesn't make expensive new problems for us. It does not pollute the air and water, make people sick, or make the planet warmer. Solar and wind power are safe and clean, and we will never run out of them. Most importantly, green power will let us leave the gift of life to our children and grandchildren.

## "Green Power" - Reading Questions

1. What is "green power"?

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2. Read these sentences from the first paragraph of the essay.

*We have to stop burning coal, oil, and gas. They are making our planet very sick by giving it a fever that is getting higher very fast. Green power is the only medicine that will work to bring down the fever.*

**Think about what the underlined part of the sentence means. What does the writer want to show?**

- A. Soon the worst may happen and it will be too late.
- B. When coal is gone we will need new types of energy.
- C. It is getting difficult to breathe because the air is dirty.
- D. People are disagreeing about energy much more now.

3. The writer calls green power a "medicine" to show that green power

- A. is not pleasing to many people.
- B. can make the planet well again.
- C. will be not always be so expensive.
- D. has problems that are not so important.

4. In paragraph 2, what evidence does the writer give to show that the earth has been getting hotter?  
Write *three* answers.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

5. In the essay, what evidence does the writer give to show that coal is a main reason why the earth is getting hotter?

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6. Read this sentence from paragraph 2.

*We are leaving a dead garden to the children of the future.*

How does the writer want readers to feel when they read this sentence?

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7. PART A. In paragraph 5, the writer talks about the claims of coal companies. What does the writer say the coal companies' claims are? Write their *two* claims.

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PART B. How does the writer answer the coal companies' claims? What does the writer say to show readers that the coal companies are wrong? Write the answer. Use information from the essay to show what you mean.

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8. Read this sentence from paragraph 7.

*Coal companies say that they can wash the dangerous gases and chemicals out of the coal and keep them out of the air using a Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) system.*

**What is the writer's answer to this claim of the coal companies?**

- A. CCS cannot really take CO<sub>2</sub> out of the air.
- B. Building CCS plants will put CO<sub>2</sub> in the air.
- C. It will take too much time for CCS to be ready.
- D. It is too dangerous to put CO<sub>2</sub> in the sea or ground.

9. Read this sentence from the last paragraph.

*In the long run, green power is cheaper because it doesn't make expensive new problems for us.*

**What does "in the long run" probably mean in the sentence?**

- A. before now
- B. never again
- C. sometimes but not very much
- D. from now to a much later time

**10. Read these three sentences from the essay.**

*Scientists think that if we don't stop putting CO<sub>2</sub> into the air, much more ice will melt, and then the oceans will flood many cities in many places. (paragraph 2)*

*Scientists think that by the end of the 21st century, 70% of the different types of plants and animals on Earth will be gone. (paragraph 2)*

*Scientists say that if we want to avoid the worst problems, we have to put 50% less CO<sub>2</sub> into the air by 2020. (paragraph 3)*

**What do these sentences do in the essay?**

- A. They show why coal may be gone sooner than some people think.
- B. They show that scientists do not agree about what will happen later this century.
- C. They show that it is important to find an answer to the energy problem very soon.
- D. They show how green power can repair most of the problems that coal has made.

**11. What do you think is the writer's best reason for why we should use green power instead of coal?  
Write what the reason is. Then write why you think it is the best.**

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**12. What do you think is the writer's worst reason for why we should green power instead of fossil fuels?  
Write what the reason is. Then write why you think it is the worst.**

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Your Writing: Thinking about the Argumentative Essays

Answer the questions. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. The writer of "Why We Still Need Coal" and the writer of "Green Power" both present information about "clean coal."

How is the information the writers present the same? How is it different? What evidence do the writers give for their claims? Write about it. Use information from both "Why We Still Need Coal" and "Green Power" to show what you mean.

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2. Both writers make the same argument about why they prefer one type of energy more:

- *The writer of "Why We Still Need Coal" says that renewable energy will not be ready for many years, so we need to use coal.*
- *The writer of "Green Power" says clean coal will not be ready for many years, so we need to use green power.*

Who do you think is right? Why? What reasons or evidence is there for your opinion?

Write about it. Use information from *both* "Why We Still Need Coal" and "Green Power" to show what you mean.

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3. Write about the energy debate. What are the important ideas and information to know? What are the different types of energy? Why do people disagree about what types of energy to use?

Write so that someone who doesn't know about the energy debate can learn about it. Use information from *both* "Why We Still Need Coal" and "Green Power" in your writing.

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### What is a Biography?

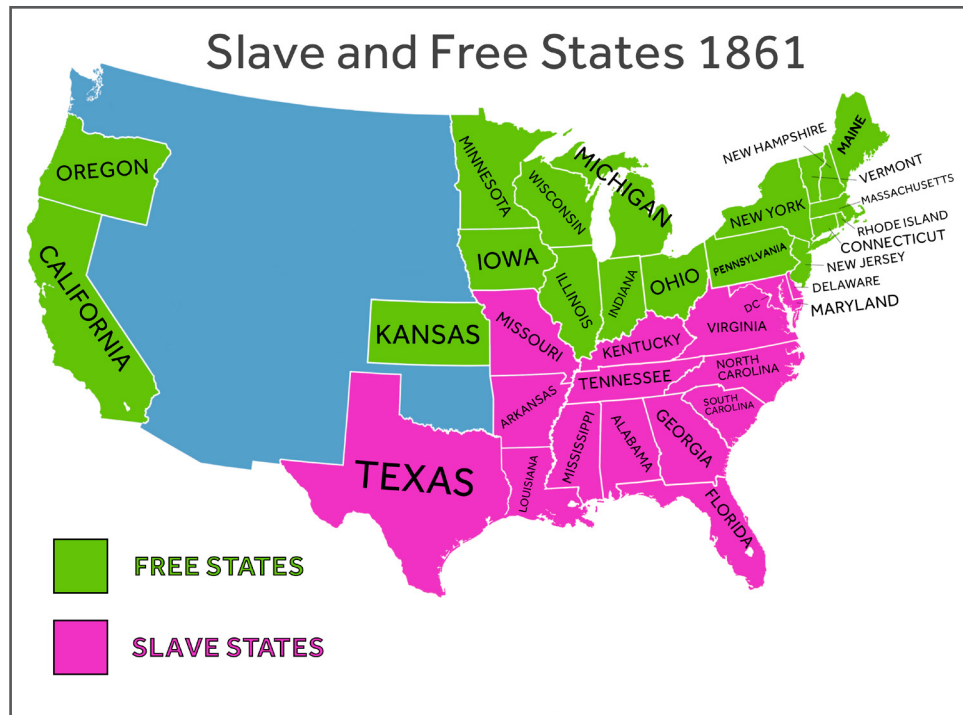
Written texts are often called either **fiction** or **nonfiction**.

Fiction is writing that *imagines* something. Novels, folktales, and poems are examples of fiction. Novels and folktales are not true stories; they are imagined stories. Poems are written to show feelings and ideas; they are not written to give people information.

Nonfiction, however, is writing to give people information. Nonfiction is writing about a real person or something that really happened. Authors of nonfiction try to give true information about something real. For example, this writing (*What Is a Biography?*) is a nonfiction text because it gives information about types of writing. A book that tells you what baseball is and how it is played would also be an example of a nonfiction text.

A **biography** is a nonfiction text about the life of a real person. The English word biography comes from two Greek words: *bio* = life, and *graphia* = writing. The author of a biography tries to tell the true story of a person's life. A biography may be less than a page long, or it may be a book of hundreds of pages. The author of a biography must learn about the person's life and choose what is most important to write about.

## “The Life of Sojourner Truth” - Historical Background



In the United States, **slavery** was legal until 1865. Slavery is when people own other people and make them work without pay. A person who is owned by another person is called a **slave**. A slave's owner is called a **master**. When slavery was **legal**, slaves could be bought and sold by their masters, and slaves had no **rights**.

When the United States first became a country in 1776, slavery was legal in each of the first thirteen states. One by one, the states in the **North** made slavery **illegal**. However, in the 1800s, the United States was growing into a bigger country. By 1860, there were more slaves than ever before—almost four million African Americans were slaves. Most of them lived in the South, but even in the “free states” of the North, many Americans were not free. Most of the laws that made slavery illegal in Northern states said that slavery would end very slowly. Many slaves had to work until they were in their twenties before they could be free.

Many people—both **black** and **white**—wanted slavery to end, and fought to make it illegal in the South. The North and South disagreed about slavery. This disagreement led to the Civil War (1861-1865), a war between the North and the South. The North won the war in 1865, and Congress passed a **law** that made slavery illegal in the United States. The law is called the Thirteenth Amendment. The Thirteenth Amendment changed the Constitution of the United States. Because the Constitution is so difficult to change, the Thirteenth Amendment means that slavery will never become legal again in the future.

Although the Thirteenth Amendment made the slaves free, it did not give African Americans the same rights as white Americans. The people who had worked and fought to end slavery had thought a lot about the importance of rights. Fighting to end slavery changed their thinking about many things. Some people who had fought against slavery now wanted to fight for black people's rights. Many white women who had fought against slavery now wanted more rights for themselves, too. After the Civil War, all of these people worked to make the country better for more Americans. They were able to make many changes happen. Some of the changes happened quickly. Other changes took many years. Today, some people are still trying to make the country a better place for more Americans.



## The Life of Sojourner Truth

Isabella Baumfree was born into slavery in New York in about 1797. She was a slave for 29 years before she became free. After she became free, she took a new name, Sojourner Truth. A *sojourner* is a person who travels from place to place. Sojourner Truth traveled through the United States delivering religious messages and speaking about the need for rights for black people and women. Some of Sojourner Truth's ideas were "ahead of her time"—people did not understand them or agree with them at first. During her speeches, some people would call out angry words. However, Sojourner Truth was not afraid to speak about ideas that were unpopular or unusual. Slowly, people began to listen to her words and think about them. As time passed, more people wanted to hear Sojourner Truth speak. Sometimes, she would even sing her message. She became famous for her wise words and her strong, beautiful voice. Today Sojourner Truth is remembered as a clear voice of truth during a time when America failed to keep its promises of freedom and rights for all people.

Isabella Baumfree was born in New York into a family owned by a Dutch-speaking man, so Isabella and her brothers and sisters grew up speaking only Dutch. When she was nine years old, Isabella was sold to a different master and had to leave her family forever. Her new master spoke only English and treated her very badly. He often hurt her because she could not understand what he told her to do. After she was sold again, Isabella learned English by listening to people speak. However, she never learned to read or write, because it was illegal for slaves to learn these things.

At about age 18, Isabella fell in love with a man named Robert who was a slave from another farm. Robert's master did not want Robert and Isabella to marry because he would not own any children born to them. The law said that children

## The Life of Sojourner Truth (continued)

born to slaves became the slaves of their mother's owner. One day when Robert visited Isabella, his master became so angry that he hurt Robert very badly. Robert died soon after, before his and Isabella's daughter was born later that year. Then Isabella's master made her marry another of his slaves so that she would have more children to be his slaves. Isabella had five children altogether, and every day she worried that they might be sold.

When Isabella was about 28, her master told her he was going to set her free the next year. However, he did not keep his promise. So Isabella escaped on her own. She walked away from the farm, taking her youngest baby with her. She had to leave her other children behind. She went to the home of some neighbors who were *abolitionists*—people who wanted slavery to end. They kept her safe and helped Isabella begin her new life in freedom.

A year later—in 1827—slavery became illegal in New York for some slaves, including Isabella. However, the new law did not make her children free. Then Isabella learned that her old master had sold her five-year-old son to a man in Alabama. Alabama was in the South, where slaves were often treated worse than in the North. Isabella fought to get her son back. In New York, it was illegal to sell slaves to people in other states, so Isabella went to court. With the help of her abolitionist friends, she won her case and got her son back. This surprised many people. It was very unusual for a black woman to take a white man to court in the 19th century. It was even more unusual for her to win!

As a free person, Isabella wanted to help others become free, too. Slavery was still legal in many states, especially in the South. Isabella's religion had always been very important to her. She believed that God had given all people the same rights. By 1843, Isabella believed the best way for her to work for God was to speak God's message to people. She began to work with other abolitionists, and she started a new life as "Sojourner Truth." With her new name, she traveled to different parts of the United States, giving speeches about God's love and the need to end slavery. Sojourner Truth became well known and loved by many people.

In 1865, Congress passed a law to make slavery illegal in the United States. Sojourner Truth said God had answered her prayers. But black people still had very few rights in America. At the same time, women were also fighting for more rights. Sojourner Truth worked with others to win rights for black people and rights for women.

At that time, "rights for black people" often meant rights for black *men*, and "rights for women" often meant rights for *white* women. Sojourner Truth was one of very few people in the country to speak about the rights of *black women*. In 1867, Sojourner Truth gave a speech at the Equal Rights Association meeting in New York. The Equal Rights Association was a group of people—many of whom had been abolitionists—who were now trying to get voting rights for white women and black men. In her speech, Sojourner Truth said,

## The Life of Sojourner Truth (continued)

*There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before.*

Sojourner Truth understood that giving rights only to some groups of people would not solve the country's problems. All during her life, anytime people talked about rights, Sojourner Truth spoke up for the people who were forgotten. Her thinking about rights was many years—even centuries—ahead of her time.

For much of her life, Sojourner Truth fought for the rights of all people. She helped slaves escape. She helped the newly freed slaves begin their new life and find jobs. She tried to get the government to give land to black people to start their lives, just as the government had given land to white people. She fought to change laws that were unfair to black citizens. In addition, she fought for women's right to vote. She never stopped speaking up for what was right, both in her speeches and in her work with others. In so many ways, Sojourner Truth lived up to the promise of her name. By the end of her life, her words had become part of the history of America. When she died in 1883, more than a thousand people came to her funeral.

## A Note about Historical English

**Historical English** is English that was used at an earlier time in history but is not used anymore. The quotation from Sojourner Truth's speech has an example of historical English in it. In the quotation, Sojourner Truth uses the word "colored" instead of "African American" or "black" to say what group of people she is talking about. This use of the word "colored" is an example of historical English. Today, the word "colored" is almost never used as a name for a group of people.

The different words used for Americans whose families came from Africa long ago are an example of how language changes over time.

After the Civil War, freed slaves called themselves "colored people." Using the word "colored" showed that they had good feelings about themselves. However, during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, many Americans did not want to be called "colored" anymore. They began to use the word "black" instead. Today, "black" or "African American" are most often used. In the United States, the using the word "colored" as a name for a group of people is not nice or polite anymore.



## "The Life of Sojourner Truth" - Reading Questions

Instructions:

- Some questions have answer choices next to the letters A, B, C, and D. Circle the correct answer.
- Other questions have a place for you to write your answer. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. What does Sojourner Truth's name mean? Why did she change her name from Isabella Baumfree to Sojourner Truth? Write about it. Use information from the text to show what you mean.

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2. Read these sentences from the biography.

*Sometimes, she would even sing her message. She became famous for her wise words and her strong, beautiful voice.*

Look at the dictionary entry for the word **voice**. Which meaning is used in the sentence above?

**voice** - n.

1. what people hear when a person talks or sings
2. a person or group's right to say what they want or think
3. a person who speaks about a wish or idea that is important to other people, too
4. thoughts that are like words inside a person's head

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

**3. Read these sentences from the biography.**

*When Isabella was about 28, her master told her he was going to set her free the next year. However, he did not keep his promise. So Isabella escaped on her own. She walked away from the farm, taking her youngest baby with her. She had to leave her other children behind.*

**What does the verb to *escape* mean?**

- A. to do what you say you will do
- B. to get free from a place or person
- C. to stop being angry with someone
- D. to do what is best for other people

**4. The biography says that an *abolitionist* is a person who**

- A. wants slavery to end.
- B. helps people who need help.
- C. thinks it is okay to break a bad law.
- D. wants women to have the same rights as men.

**5. A main idea in the biography is that slaves had very difficult lives. How does the writer use information about Sojourner Truth's life to show that life was difficult for slaves? Give *three* examples from Sojourner Truth's life that help to show how difficult life was for slaves.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**6. PART A. Read the quotation from Sojourner Truth's speech at the 1867 Equal Rights Association meeting in New York.**

*There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before.*

**What does Sojourner Truth say will happen if black women do not get rights?**

- A. Black women will become the slaves of black men.
- B. Black men will not be able to have the same rights as white men.
- C. Black men will use their new rights to help black women get rights.
- D. Black women will not be able to help white women fight for women's rights.

**PART B. Why is Sojourner Truth's message about what will happen a good way to make the people at the meeting understand that black women need rights, too?**

- A. The people at the meeting thought women's rights were more important than men's rights.
- B. The people at the meeting had believed that slavery was wrong and would not want it to return.
- C. The people at the meeting were happy that slavery had ended and were tired of fighting for rights.
- D. The people at the meeting had fought to win rights for black men that were the same as white men's rights.

**7. Read these sentences from two different parts of the biography.**

*During her speeches, some people would call out angry words. However, Sojourner Truth was not afraid to speak about ideas that were unpopular or unusual.*

*A year later—in 1827—slavery became illegal in New York for some slaves, including Isabella. However, the new law did not make her children free.*

**Which of these words means the same as *however*?**

- A. but
- B. first
- C. always
- D. instead

**8. Read these sentences from the biography.**

*For much of her life, Sojourner Truth fought for the rights of all people. She helped slaves escape. She helped the newly freed slaves begin their new life and find jobs. She tried to get the government to give land to black people to start their lives, just as the government had given land to white people. She fought to change laws that were unfair to black citizens. In addition, she fought for women's right to vote.*

**Which of these words means the same as *in addition*?**

- A. also
- B. soon
- C. except
- D. because

**9. Read this sentence from the text.**

*Today Sojourner Truth is remembered as a clear voice of truth during a time when America failed to keep its promises of freedom and rights for all people.*

**What does this sentence mean? How does the information in the text help show that Sojourner Truth was a "clear voice of truth during a time when America failed to keep its promises of freedom and rights for all people"? Write about it. Use information from the text to help you make your answers.**

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**10. Read this sentence from the biography.**

*In so many ways, Sojourner lived up to the promise of her name.*

**Give two examples of how Sojourner Truth "lived up to the promise of her name."**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

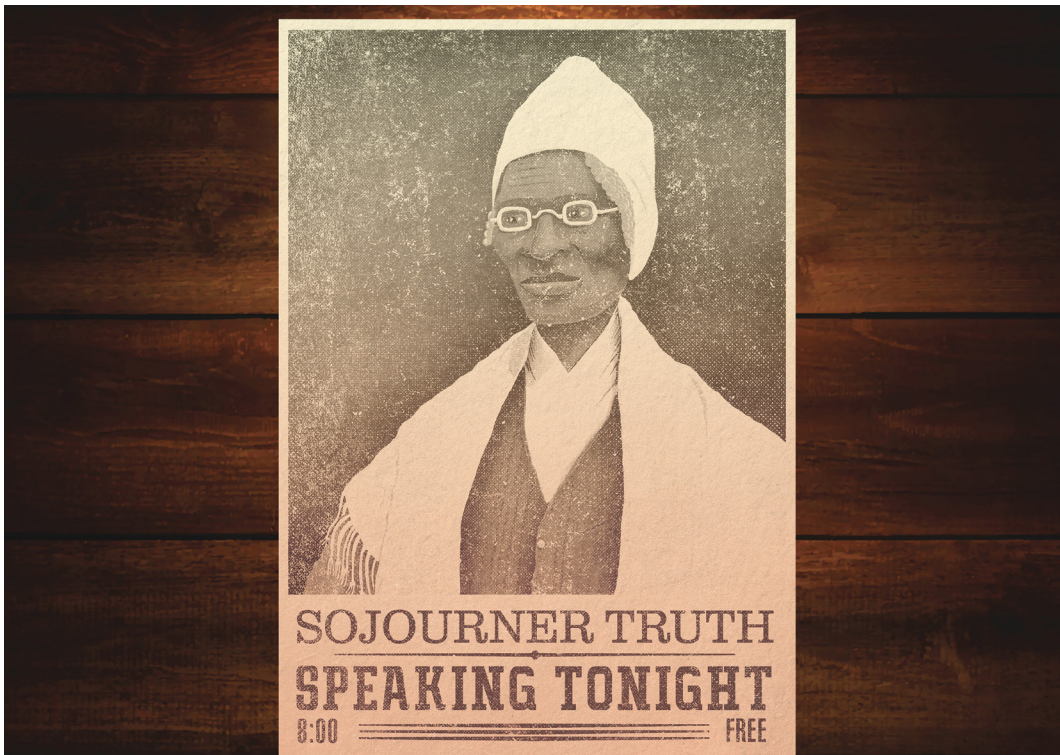
### What is a Speech?

Written texts are often called either **fiction** or **nonfiction**.

A **speech** is a spoken presentation that a person delivers to a big group of people. The person delivering the speech is called **the speaker**. The group of people listening to the speech is called **the audience**.

### *Knowledge of Language: Dialects*

Spoken English has many different **dialects**. A dialect is how a language is spoken by people who live in one part of the country (or world) or who are part of one group of people. Because the United States is so big, there are many different parts of the country that have their own way of speaking English. Different dialects may pronounce the same words differently. They may also use different grammar. Different dialects may also use different words to say the same thing. For example, in the Western part of the United States and on the East Coast, most people use the word *soda* for a type of drink. In the Northern and Midwestern parts of the country, most people use the word *pop* to mean the same type of drink. In parts of the South, people use the word *coke* instead.



## Two Texts of Sojourner Truth's Speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention

In 1851, Sojourner Truth gave a speech at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio. Sojourner Truth had not planned to give a speech at the convention, but she wanted to say what she thought about some ideas she had heard there. Some ministers from the town came to the convention to say that women should not have rights. They said that women were not strong enough to have the same rights as men, and that women needed men to do things for them. They said that women could not think as well as men, so they should not have the right to vote. Sojourner Truth decided to give a speech so she could tell the ministers why she did not agree with what they said. Even though her speech was unplanned, many people thought it was a great speech. Newspapers from 1851 say that Sojourner Truth's words that day carried much power and that the audience loved the speech.

Some people who listened to the speech tried to write it on paper, but different people wrote it differently. Today, we have two different texts of Sojourner Truth's speech. One text was written by a newspaper writer named Marius Robinson one month after he listened the speech. The other text of the speech was written by Frances Gage, a poet and story writer who was also the president of the convention. Gage wrote Sojourner Truth's speech on paper in 1863—12 years after she heard it!

The two texts are very different from each other. The text written by Gage became very famous. It is the one most Americans know. It is written in a dialect that was spoken by Southern slaves in the 19th century.



## Two Texts of Sojourner Truth's Speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention (continued)

However, Sojourner Truth did not speak in a Southern dialect. She grew up in the North and spoke in a Northern dialect. No one knows for sure why Gage wrote Sojourner Truth's speech differently from how Sojourner Truth really spoke.

Also, in Gage's text, Sojourner Truth says she had thirteen children. However, historians are sure that Sojourner Truth had only five children.

Robinson's text is written in a Northern dialect, but his text did not become well known. Very few people know about this text.

Today, we don't know for sure what Sojourner Truth really said at the convention. We only know that her speech became important to many people and is very famous today.

Here is part of her speech from each of the two different texts.

### "Ain't I a Woman?" speech by Sojourner Truth

(written on paper by Frances Gage in 1863)

That man over there says that women need to be helped into **carriages**, and lifted over **ditches**, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over **mud-puddles**, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have **ploughed** and planted, and gathered into **barns**, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?



carriage



ditch



mud-puddle



ploughed



barn



## Two Texts of Sojourner Truth's Speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention (continued)

### Sojourner Truth's Speech at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention of 1851

(written on paper by Marius Robinson in 1851)

I want to say a few words about this matter. I am for woman's rights. I have as much **muscle** as any man, and can do as much work as any man. I have plowed and **reaped** and **husked** and **chopped** and **mowed**, and can any man do more than that? I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.



muscle



reap



husk



chop



mow

### **A Note About Reading Historical Texts**

Like most people who grew up as slaves, Sojourner Truth never learned to read or write, so she never wrote any of the words she spoke. We have information about her words only because people who listened to her speak wrote her words on paper. However, some of her words were not written as soon as she said them. They were written days—or even years—later. The people who wrote her words may not have remembered everything right. They may have changed some of her words. Because of this, we can never be sure about what Sojourner Truth really said.

However, the texts of Sojourner Truth's speeches have become important even though we do not know how real the texts are.

Today, we read these texts to help us understand the past, but we also read them to help us understand things about ourselves today. It is almost impossible for us to understand how people in the past really thought. We look at the past through ideas we have today, though many of these ideas didn't exist in the past.

Today, we read the texts of Sojourner Truth's speeches and think about what they mean. We still call them Sojourner Truth's speeches even though the words in the speech have changed from what she really said. We talk about the words and ideas even though the meanings may be different for different people at different times in history.

## "Two Texts of Sojourner Truth's Speech..." - Reading Questions

### 1. The writer says that "many people thought it was a great speech."

What information does the writer give to show that people at the convention liked the speech?

- A. The writer presents the texts of the speech.
- B. The writer says that the speech is very famous today.
- C. The writer uses a quotation from an audience member.
- D. The writer tells what the newspapers said about the speech.

### 2. Here are some sentences from what you read.

*Sojourner Truth had not planned to give a speech at the convention, but she wanted to say what she thought about some ideas she had heard there. Some ministers from the town came to the convention to say that women should not have rights.*

*Gage wrote Sojourner Truth's speech on paper in 1863—12 years after she heard it!*

*I have heard much about the sexes being equal; I can carry as much as any man, and can eat as much too, if I can get it. I am as strong as any man that is now.*

What does heard mean?

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### 3. Read this sentence from the Gage text.

*That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere.*

Who is Sojourner Truth talking about when she says "that man over there"?

- A. Jesus
- B. her old master
- C. a newspaper writer
- D. one of the ministers

**4. Read these sentences from the Gage text.**

*That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?*

**What does Sojourner Truth most want the audience to understand when she says these words?**

- A. Her life has been difficult.
- B. Women do not need extra help.
- C. People should be more polite to black women.
- D. She is not really free even though slavery ended.

**5. Read this sentence from the Gage text.**

*Look at me! Look at my arm!*

**What does Sojourner Truth want the audience to see?**

- A. how angry she is
- B. how strong she is
- C. that she has been hurt
- D. that she is telling the truth

**6. Read this sentence from the Gage text.**

*I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me!*

**What does "head me" mean in this sentence?**

- A. hurt me
- B. hear me
- C. tell me what to do
- D. do better than me

7. Read this sentence from the Gage text.

*I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me!*

Use your own words to write what this sentence means. Try to write about all the important ideas that are in the sentence.

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8. In the Gage text, Sojourner Truth asks the question "Ain't I a woman?" four times during the speech. Why does she repeat this question and what does she mean by it? What message does she want the audience to understand? Think carefully about these questions and write full answers.

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9. What information tells you that the Gage text is probably different from what Sojourner Truth really said? Write *three* things that tell you this.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Which of these *best* tells the *main ideas* of the Robinson text?**

- A. I want women's rights. I am as strong as any man and have worked as hard as any man.
- B. I want to speak. I think that men and women should have the same rights. I have heard that men and women are the same. I am even stronger than most men.
- C. When was a slave, I worked as hard as the men. I was as hungry as they were, too, but I was given less food because I am a woman. Often, I did not get enough to eat.
- D. I have done many different things in my life. I have plowed, reaped, husked, chopped, and mowed. I have worked a lot, and I am tired. Now I think I should have the right to live as I want.

**11. How are the two texts of Sojourner Truth's speech the same? How are they different? Write about it. Use examples from both texts to show what you mean.**

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**12. Which of the two texts of Sojourner Truth's speech do you prefer? Why? Write about it. Use information from both texts to explain what you mean.**

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Your Writing: Thinking about the Biography and Speech

Answer the questions. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. Read this sentence from the biography “Sojourner Truth.”

*At that time, “rights for black people” often meant rights for black men, and “rights for women” often meant rights for white women. Sojourner Truth was one of very few people in the country to speak about the rights of black women.*

How do the texts of Sojourner Truth’s speech in “Two Texts of Sojourner Truth’s Speech at the Ohio Women’s Rights Convention” show Sojourner Truth speaking about the rights of black women? Write about it. Use information from both texts of Sojourner Truth’s speech to show what you mean.

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2. If someone asked you who Sojourner Truth was, what would you tell them? Write to a friend to say who Sojourner Truth was and what her life was about. Tell your friend the information you think is important to tell someone who does not know who Sojourner Truth is.

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3. Sojourner Truth fought for people's freedom and rights. If you were going to fight for something, what would you want to fight for? Why do you think it is important?

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### What is a Historical Document?

The verb **to document** means to represent true and correct information about something very clearly so that people know the information is true, without any doubts.

A **document** is writing that presents true and correct information about something that has happened or to show that something is legal. For example, a document called a *birth certificate* shows a person's legal name, and when and where the person was born. A *marriage license* shows that two people are married. Some documents say that the government will let a person to do something such as drive (a driver's license), or travel to another country (a passport). Other documents might show that two people made a legal agreement (a contract). For example, an employee at a company has to sign a contract to show that she agrees to do the work. The company has to sign the contract to show that it agrees to pay the employee. Both have to sign their name to the document to make it a legal agreement.

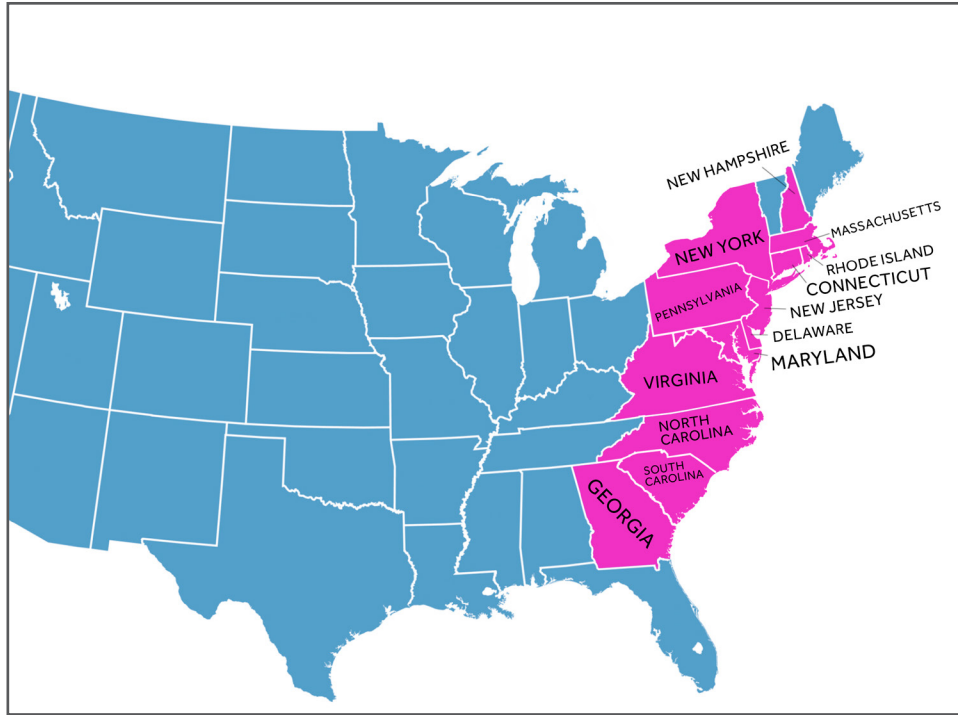
Many documents are legal documents. They carry the power of the law. Legal documents usually use language that is different from the language people speak every day to each other. Legal documents use **formal** English. This language may be difficult to understand because most people are not used to it. It is different from **informal** English, the language used for talking to friends, family, neighbors, and other people in normal life.

A **historical** document is writing from an earlier time in history. When people study a time in history, sometimes they read historical documents—documents written by people who lived during that time.

Historical documents may be very difficult to understand. They are often difficult even for people who know the language well, because of the way language changes over time. If the historical document was written a long time ago, its language may be very different from the language people use today.

The language may also be written differently. The handwritten form of the letters may difficult to read and the use of punctuation and capitals may be different. For example, in 17th and 18th century English text, it is not unusual to see some nouns begin with a capital letter.

## “What is the United States Constitution?” - Historical Background



Before the United States became a country it was a group of colonies. A colony is a place that is not its own state or country. Instead, another country owns it or has power over it. In the 1600s and 1700s, some people from England came to live in America. They lived in the British colonies in America. There were thirteen British colonies in America. In 1776, the people in these colonies wrote a famous document called the Declaration of Independence. It said that the people did not want to be British colonies anymore. They wanted to be their own American country. They fought a war with Great Britain to try to become their own country. 1783, the Americans won their war—the American War of Independence. Then it was time for them to build their new country.

One of the first things they did was write a document called a constitution. The United States Constitution was written in 1787. It became law in 1788.



## What Is the United States Constitution?

The United States Constitution is one of the country's most important documents. It was written when the United States first became a country. The Constitution sets up the powers of the government and the rights of the people. It is the highest law of the United States.

The Constitution was written after the American War of Independence, when the thirteen British colonies in America became free and independent states. The thirteen states needed a government that would hold them together as one. They needed a written set of laws and ideas—a constitution—to make them one country.

The United States Constitution was written by a group of men called the Founding Fathers. The Founding Fathers had fought to be free from the King of Great Britain. They did not want to be ruled by a king ever again. They wanted a country where the people could have a voice in the laws. In 1787, the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to decide how the government of the new country should work. They wanted it to be strong enough to hold the thirteen states together but not so strong that its citizens were not free.

It was difficult for the Founding Fathers to agree about what the Constitution should say. When they finally did agree, all the states also had to agree to the new Constitution. Some of the states worried that the Constitution gave the government too much power over the people. They did not want to vote for the Constitution unless it also had a list of the people's rights. The Founding Fathers promised to add that list later if the states agreed to the Constitution. It took a long time, but by 1788, all the states had voted to make the Constitution the law of the land.

## What Is the United States Constitution? (continued)

The Constitution begins with a section called the Preamble. The Preamble is the most famous part of the Constitution. It explains why the Constitution was written. The first words of the Preamble—"We the people"—are much larger than all the other words on the page.

**We the People** *of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

The Preamble says that the Constitution was written for many reasons: to make one country from many states; to have law and order; to make sure there is peace between the citizens; to make the country safe; to make sure the people have what they need; and to let the people be free to make their own lives.

The rest of the Constitution tells how the government will work. It divides the power of government into three parts or "branches": the President, the lawmakers (the Congress), and the courts. The three branches have to share power so that no part becomes too strong. The Constitution tells how the people will vote for leaders, how laws will be made, and how the courts will work. One part of the Constitution even tells how the Constitution can be changed.

## "What Is the United States Constitution?" - Reading Questions

Instructions:

- Some questions have answer choices next to the letters A, B, C, and D. Circle the correct answer.
- Other questions have a place for you to write your answer. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

### 1. Who wrote the Constitution?

- A. the king of England
- B. the people of America
- C. the Founding Fathers
- D. the first United States president

### 2. Read this sentence from the text.

*The Constitution was written after the American War of Independence, when the thirteen British colonies in America became free and independent states.*

Look at the dictionary entry for the word *free*. Which meaning is used in the sentence?

**free** - *adj.*

- 1. not costing any money
- 2. not having something bad in it
- 3. not under the power of someone or something else
- 4. not busy; having time to do something

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

### 3. What did the Founding Fathers do?

- A. They discovered the continent of America.
- B. They helped the King of England fight a war.
- C. They made the churches in the colonies in America.
- D. They helped make the United States its own country.

**4. The text says a constitution is “a set of laws and ideas.” Which of these ideas is in the United States Constitution?**

- A. It is wrong for any country to have colonies.
- B. The people have a voice in how the country works.
- C. All the people in the country have the same rights.
- D. The President is the most important part of the government.

**5. Some states did not want to agree to the Constitution at first. What did the Founding Fathers say to the states so that they would vote for the Constitution?**

- A. The states could make the laws.
- B. The states could have more money.
- C. A list of the people’s rights would be added later.
- D. Only the states that agreed could be in the new country.

**6. What is the Preamble?**

- A. the last section of the Constitution
- B. the first section of the Constitution
- C. a part of the Constitution that was added later
- D. a part of the Constitution that was taken out later

**7. Why is the Constitution called a “living document?” Write about it. Use information from the text to show what you mean.**

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**8. Read this sentence from the text.**

*The United States Constitution is one of the country’s most important documents.*

**Why is the Constitution so important? Write about it. Use information from the text to show what you mean.**

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9. Read this sentence from the text.

*The first words of the Preamble — “We the people” — are much larger than all the rest of the words on the page.*

Why do you think the Founding Fathers made these words bigger than the other words? Use information from the text to help show what you mean.

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10. The Preamble is a legal document written in 1787. The Preamble gives reasons why the Constitution was written. Some of those reasons are written below on the left. On the right, they are translated into simple English that is spoken today.

English from the Preamble...	translated into simple English of today
"to form a more perfect union"	to make one country from many states
"to establish justice"	to have law and order
"to insure domestic Tranquility"	to make sure there is peace between citizens
"to provide for the common defense"	to make the country safe
"to promote the general welfare"	to make sure the people have what they need

Choose one of the reasons on the left that is written in the Preamble. Draw a circle around that reason. Use a dictionary to look up the words you don't know. What do they mean? What is their connection to the words on the right? Write about it.

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**11. Read this part of the Preamble.**

*...and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, ...*

**Use a dictionary. What does the verb to secure mean?**

- A. to help something grow
- B. to fight for something important
- C. to make something safe so it won't be lost
- D. to ask for something that is difficult to have

**12. Use a dictionary. What does *blessings* mean?**

- A. difficult jobs
- B. good things
- C. simple ideas
- D. expensive things

**13. Use a dictionary. What does *liberty* mean?**

- A. being free
- B. being happy
- C. working hard
- D. having money

**14. Use a dictionary. What does *posterity* mean?**

- A. people who will be born in the future
- B. people who all believe the same ideas
- C. countries that are near to the United States
- D. countries that are friends with the United States

**15. What does "to secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our Posterity" mean?**

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## What Are the Constitutional Amendments?

The United States Constitution has lasted for more than 225 years—longer than any other national constitution in the world. One reason why the Constitution is still here today is that it can be repaired if it is not working well. Written into the Constitution is a way to make changes. Changes to the Constitution are called amendments. An amendment can be a new law added to the Constitution, or it can be a change to a law that is already in the Constitution. An amendment can also take a law out of the Constitution.

It takes two steps to change the Constitution. First, Congress has to vote on the amendment. At least 2/3 of the Congress has to vote for it, or the amendment cannot go any further. If the amendment does get enough votes to pass through Congress, the states then have to vote on it. At least 3/4 of the states must vote for the amendment. Only then can the change become part of the Constitution. The Constitution is not easy to change. More than 11,000 amendments have been voted on, but only 27 have passed.

The first ten amendments were added to the Constitution in 1791. They are called the Bill of Rights. They were written by the Founding Fathers to make sure that the government would respect the rights of the people. Later, other amendments were added. Some amendments gave new rights to the people. Others added a new rule about how the government works. On the next page you'll find several important Constitutional amendments.

### **1st AMENDMENT (1791)**

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

### **13th AMENDMENT (1865)**

Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

### **14th AMENDMENT (1868)**

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

### **15th AMENDMENT (1870)**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

### **19th AMENDMENT (1920)**

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

### **26th AMENDMENT (1971)**

The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

The 1st Amendment is probably the most famous. It says that people do not need to be afraid of the government. The government cannot have a religion and the people can have any religion; the people can say or write what they think; they can meet together in large groups; and they can ask the government to change what they do not like.

The 13th amendment makes slavery illegal. Slavery is when someone owns another person or makes a person work without pay.

The 14th amendment says that all people born in the United States or who later become citizens of the United States have all the rights of citizens.

The 15th amendment says that the right to vote cannot be taken away because of a person's skin color.

The 19th amendment says that the right to vote cannot be taken away because a person is a woman.

The 26th amendment makes 18 the legal voting age.

## “What are the Constitutional Amendments?” - Reading Questions

### 1. Read this sentence from the text.

*The United States Constitution has lasted for more than 225 years—longer than any other national constitution in the world.*

**In the sentence, to *last* means**

- A. to change a lot.
- B. to make problems.
- C. to stay or be in the world.
- D. to be famous or well known.

### 2. Read this sentence from the text.

*The United States Constitution has lasted for more than 225 years—longer than any other national constitution in the world.*

**In the sentence, *longer* means**

- A. more help.
- B. more time.
- C. more pages.
- D. more inches.

### 3. Describe what a constitutional amendment is.

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**4. Read this sentence from the text.**

*It takes two steps to change the Constitution.*

**Look at the dictionary entry for the word step. Which meaning is used in the sentence?**

**step - noun**

1. one part of some stairs; a stair
2. one part of walking; when the foot touches the ground
3. one part of doing something
4. one part of a dance

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4

**5. Read this sentence from the text.**

*They were written by the Founding Fathers to make sure that the government would respect the rights of the people.*

**To *respect* means**

- A. to say something more than one time.
- B. to show that something is wrong or not good.
- C. to be afraid of someone or something that has a lot of power.
- D. to do or say things to show that something is very important.

**6. Which amendment in the text is part of the Bill of Rights?**

- A. the 1st Amendment
- B. the 13th Amendment
- C. the 14th Amendment
- D. the 26th Amendment

7. Read this part of the 1st Amendment.

Congress shall make no law ... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press.

“The freedom of speech” means the people’s right to say anything they want to say. Look at the dictionary entry for the verb to *abridge*.

**abridge** - *verb*

1. to make a book shorter by taking out some parts
2. *formal*: to take away all or some of someone's rights or power

Which meaning of the verb to *abridge* is used in the 1st Amendment? How do you know the answer? Write about it.

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8. Look at the dictionary entry for the word *press*.

**press** - *noun*

1. a machine that can push on something to make it flat or to get juice or oil from it
2. all the people who write or make the newspapers and the books

**press** - *verb*

1. to push on something
2. to iron clothes
3. to try to make something happen
4. to ask for something more than one time

In the 1st Amendment, *freedom of the press* means being free to

- A. make helpful machines.
- B. take care of things at home
- C. try to do things that are difficult.
- D. share ideas and information in writing.



**9. Read this part of the 13th Amendment.**

*Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime ... shall exist within the United States.*

**Look at the underlined words. Look up the ones you do not know. The sentence says it is legal to make a person work without pay *only* if the person**

- A. is younger than age 18.
- B. is not a citizen of the United States.
- C. did not follow the laws of the United States.
- D. has a family that needs help in its business.

**10. Read this part of the 14th Amendment.**

*No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States....*

**Use a dictionary to look up the words you do not know. What does this part of the 14th Amendment mean?**

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**11. Look at the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments.**

<b>15th AMENDMENT (1870)</b> The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.
<b>19th AMENDMENT (1920)</b> The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
<b>26th AMENDMENT (1971)</b> The right of citizens of the United States, who are eighteen years of age or older, to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of age.

**In the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments, “on account of” means**

- A. part of.
- B. outside of.
- C. instead of.
- D. because of.

**12. How are the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments the same? How are they different? Write about it.**

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## Your Writing: Thinking about the Historical Documents

Answer the questions. Remember to use complete sentences and check your spelling.

1. What is the Bill of Rights? Write about it. Use information from *both* "What Is the United States Constitution?" and "What Are the Constitutional Amendments?" to show what you mean.

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2. How do amendments help to make the Constitution a "living document"? Write about it. Use information from *both* "What Is the United States Constitution?" and "What Are the Constitutional Amendments?" to show what you mean.

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3. Write how it is possible, but not too easy, to change the Constitution. Use information from “What Are the Constitutional Amendments?” to show what you mean.

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4. If you could write an amendment to the Constitution, what would it say? Why would your amendment be a good idea? Write about it.

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## Education

## About Rosetta Stone

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