

Grade 6 – Week 1

Reading 1: The Giant Wave That Changed Physics

In December of 2004, one of the most powerful tsunamis in recorded history struck the Indian Ocean, triggered by a 9.1 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra. The tsunami claimed over 200,000 lives and reached coastal areas in 14 different countries. But from this tragedy came a surprising discovery.

Scientists around the world noticed that Earth's gravity field had slightly shifted. Satellites that monitor the planet's shape and gravity showed that the quake had actually moved the Earth's mass and even changed how it rotated—just by a fraction of a second, but measurable.

Engineers and geologists began using new satellite data to study tectonic plates, leading to improved tsunami warning systems. It also inspired young researchers to ask bigger questions about the forces underneath our feet.

One young student, Arjun, living in India, was so fascinated that he began writing a science blog at age 11. Today, he's studying geophysics and credits the tsunami as the moment that sparked his curiosity.

Questions:

- 1.** What natural disaster occurred in December 2004, and where did it start?
- 2.** What unusual effect did scientists notice afterward?
- 3.** How did this event affect future scientific tools or systems?
- 4.** Who was Arjun, and how did this event impact him?
- 5.** Why is it important for young people to learn from real-world events like this?

Reading 2: The Case of the Missing Tools

Ellie was tired of math drills. So when her dad asked her to help organize the shed as part of homeschool "life skills" class, she jumped at the chance.

The shed was dusty, cluttered, and full of mysterious containers labeled things like "Useful Stuff" and "Extra Wires." Ellie created a system—bins for tools, gardening, sports, and "dad's mystery drawer."

But something strange kept happening. Every time she finished organizing a shelf, tools would disappear. A wrench. A level. Even the tape measure.

"I'm being sabotaged," Ellie whispered.

Then she caught the culprit on her tablet's camera: the family cat. It had been dragging shiny tools into the doghouse out back. No one knew why.

They retrieved the missing items, added a latch to the shed door, and gave the cat a new toy made from leftover wire.

Ellie updated her journal: *Problem-solving complete. Feline mystery solved. Tool recovery successful.*

Questions:

1. What task was Ellie given for her homeschool lesson?
2. How did she organize the shed?
3. What strange problem kept happening?
4. How did she solve the mystery?
5. What skills did Ellie use during this project?

Grade 6 – Week 2

Reading 1: When Volcanoes Talk Back

In 1980, Mount St. Helens in Washington erupted with the force of hundreds of atomic bombs. Ash shot 80,000 feet into the air, forests were flattened, and the mountain lost over 1,300 feet of its summit. It was terrifying—and fascinating.

Since then, scientists have used new technology to predict volcanic eruptions more accurately. They monitor changes in temperature, gas levels, and even tiny earthquakes that shake the ground before an explosion.

Today, volcanologists use drones and satellite imagery to study volcanoes around the world. They've discovered strange facts, like how certain volcanic gases affect climate or how lava tubes can preserve ancient fossils.

One project even tests sending robots into lava tunnels on the Moon. It turns out Earth's volcanoes might help us explore other planets too.

Questions:

- 1.** What major volcanic eruption happened in 1980, and what was its impact?
- 2.** What tools do scientists now use to study volcanoes?
- 3.** What strange discoveries have volcanologists made?
- 4.** How might volcanoes help with space exploration?
- 5.** What can we learn by studying extreme natural events?

Reading 2: The Popcorn Disaster Experiment

Noah was conducting a homeschool science project: testing which brand of popcorn popped the most kernels.

He set up three brands, three bowls, a microwave, and a notepad. First up: Brand A. Good results. Then Brand B—extra buttery and extra loud.

Finally, Brand C. Noah set the timer, stepped away to jot notes... and forgot about the microwave.

A loud *POP—CRACK—WHOOSH!* sent him running. Popcorn was flying everywhere. The bag had exploded. There was popcorn in the sink, the floor, and one stuck to the dog.

His mom walked in just as a kernel rolled across the counter.

“Well,” she said. “How’s the experiment going?”

“Explosively,” Noah replied.

They laughed, cleaned up, and Noah rewrote his conclusion: *Brand C—Tasty but dangerous. Handle with care.*

Questions:

1. What was Noah trying to test in his experiment?
2. How did he set up the project?
3. What mistake happened with Brand C?
4. What was the outcome of the experiment?
5. What lesson did Noah learn about observation?

Grade 6 – Week 3

Reading 1: What Lives Under the Ice?

In Antarctica, temperatures can drop to -80°F . The landscape is mostly ice, snow, and wind. Yet somehow, scientists recently discovered creatures living in a lake buried more than 2,000 feet below the ice sheet.

The lake, called Lake Mercer, had been hidden for thousands of years. Using drills, remote cameras, and sterilized equipment, researchers found tiny shrimp-like creatures and bacteria that survived without sunlight.

These life forms use chemical energy from rocks instead of sunlight. It's called "chemosynthesis," and it's similar to how some ocean life survives near volcanic vents.

These discoveries are changing how scientists think about life—not just on Earth, but on other icy planets and moons like Europa.

It turns out, life doesn't need sunshine. Just the right conditions.

Questions:

- 1.** What is Lake Mercer, and where is it located?
- 2.** What surprising forms of life were discovered there?
- 3.** How do these organisms survive without sunlight?
- 4.** What is "chemosynthesis"?
- 5.** How might this change our search for life beyond Earth?

Reading 2: The Unexpected Gardening Success

For homeschool science, Ava planted carrots. She watered them, tracked the sunlight, and made a fancy chart. But after three weeks, nothing happened.

She was about to give up when she saw tiny green shoots. Excited, she carefully weeded the patch—only to accidentally pull up two baby carrots.

“They’re so... stubby,” she said.

Her mom laughed. “They’re beginners, like you.”

Over the next few weeks, the carrots grew thicker and longer. Ava added compost, made little name tags, and even sang to them during watering. By week eight, she harvested a full basket.

At dinner, everyone agreed they were the crunchiest, freshest carrots ever.

Ava smiled. “Science tastes better with ranch.”

Questions:

1. What was Ava's homeschool project?
2. What happened early in the experiment?
3. How did she care for her garden?
4. What results did she see by the end?
5. What lesson did she learn from growing carrots?

Grade 6 – Week 4

Reading 1: The Jellyfish That Can Live Forever

In 1988, a scientist discovered a tiny jellyfish called *Turritopsis dohrnii*. It wasn't very big—about the size of a pinky nail—but it could do something incredible: when injured or old, it could revert to its younger form and start its life cycle all over again.

This jellyfish, nicknamed the “immortal jellyfish,” became a topic of huge interest. How does it manage to restart its own cells? Could humans ever learn to copy that process?

Researchers now study these jellyfish to better understand aging, healing, and even cancer resistance. So far, the secret lies in their ability to reprogram their cells—like pressing a reset button.

Though it doesn't make them completely invincible, this tiny creature may help us understand how life could be extended for all kinds of species—maybe even someday for humans.

Questions:

1. What special ability does *Turritopsis dohrnii* have?
2. Why is it called the “immortal jellyfish”?
3. What do scientists hope to learn from studying it?
4. How does it "restart" its life cycle?
5. How could this research help humans?

Reading 2: The Field Trip That Wasn't

Jonah's homeschool group had planned a big field trip to a science museum—until the van broke down halfway there.

Everyone was disappointed. The museum was hours away, and the bus wouldn't be fixed for hours.

That's when Mrs. Patel, one of the parents, pulled out a backpack full of science kits: magnets, mini-rockets, fossils, and even a solar-powered robot.

They set up a field trip in the parking lot.

They built bottle rockets that soared over a fence. They explored fossil prints with magnifying glasses. They voted on science trivia with sidewalk chalk.

By the end of the afternoon, they had more laughs than they expected.

Jonah told his mom, "Honestly? That was better than the museum."

Questions:

- 1.** What happened to prevent the group from reaching the museum?
- 2.** How did Mrs. Patel save the day?
- 3.** What activities did the students do instead?
- 4.** How did Jonah feel about the experience?
- 5.** What lesson can be learned from this story?

Grade 6 – Week 5

Reading 1: How Trees Talk to Each Other

You might think trees just stand there silently, but scientists have discovered something amazing: trees actually communicate. Using a network of fungi beneath the soil—often called the “Wood Wide Web”—trees send signals to one another.

This underground system connects tree roots with tiny threads called mycorrhizae. Through this connection, trees can send water, nutrients, and even warning signals. If a tree is being eaten by insects, it can send a chemical message to nearby trees so they can prepare their defenses.

Older, taller trees act like “mother trees,” sharing nutrients with younger ones that are still growing. In some experiments, scientists even saw dying trees send all their remaining energy to their neighbors before they fell.

This hidden network has changed how we understand forests. It reminds us that nature is more connected—and cooperative—than we ever imagined.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the “Wood Wide Web,” and how does it work?
- 2.** What kind of messages can trees send through this network?
- 3.** What role do “mother trees” play?
- 4.** What happens when a tree is dying?
- 5.** How does this discovery change the way we view forests?

Reading 2: The Lemonade Business Plan

Ella wanted to buy a digital drawing tablet, but it cost \$95. Her parents said she could earn the money herself, so she made a plan—sell lemonade.

But this wasn't your average stand. Ella created a mini business plan. She calculated the cost of lemons, sugar, cups, and signs. She even offered two flavors: classic and strawberry-mint.

Her little brother helped by dancing to get people's attention (and asking for tips). Ella made signs with prices and friendly phrases like "Chill with us!" and "Fresh-squeezed joy!"

By the end of Saturday, she had earned \$48. She saved half and restocked supplies. The next weekend, she added homemade cookies and a punch card for returning customers.

It took three weekends, but Ella bought her tablet—and learned she loved small business just as much as drawing.

Questions:

- 1.** What was Ella saving up for?
- 2.** How did she plan to earn the money?
- 3.** What made her lemonade stand unique?
- 4.** How did she improve her business over time?
- 5.** What lesson did Ella learn by the end?

Grade 6 – Week 6

Reading 1: The Island Where Pigs Swim

There's a tropical island in the Bahamas called Big Major Cay—but it's better known as "Pig Beach." Why? Because the only full-time residents are... pigs.

No one is completely sure how they got there. Some say sailors left them and never came back. Others believe they swam from a nearby shipwreck. However they arrived, the pigs have stayed.

They live freely on the beach, nap under palm trees, and wade into the ocean to cool off. Tourists often bring fruits and vegetables to feed them, and some pigs have even learned to swim out to boats.

The government now protects the island, ensuring visitors treat the animals respectfully. Scientists also study how the pigs have adapted to their beachside lifestyle, including their behavior, diet, and surprising swimming ability.

It's a strange but real example of how animals can adapt—and even thrive—in unexpected places.

Questions:

- 1.** What is unique about Pig Beach?
- 2.** What are some theories about how the pigs got there?
- 3.** How do the pigs interact with visitors?
- 4.** What steps are being taken to protect the island?
- 5.** What do scientists hope to learn from studying the pigs?

Reading 2: The 3D Printer Experiment

Micah's homeschool science project was to learn how 3D printers worked. His dad borrowed a small printer from a friend, and they set it up in the garage.

Micah downloaded free designs—first a cube, then a pencil holder, and finally... a miniature T-Rex.

The printer buzzed and hummed for hours. At first, the results were messy—a collapsed cube and a pencil holder with holes. But Micah took notes and adjusted the settings: layer height, temperature, and speed.

After a week, he had made a working phone stand, a set of toy gears, and the tiny T-Rex—with actual moving legs.

His final presentation included photos, a chart showing trial and error, and a section titled “How I Failed... and Why That Helped.”

His parents gave him a round of applause. “Best science fair we’ve ever had,” said his mom, holding up her new 3D-printed bookmark.

Questions:

1. What was Micah's homeschool project?
2. What did he print first, and how did it go?
3. What adjustments did he learn to make?
4. What was included in his final presentation?
5. What lesson did he learn from failing?

Grade 6 – Week 7

Reading 1: The Day Time Froze in Antarctica

In July 1983, scientists at the Soviet Union's Vostok Station in Antarctica recorded the coldest natural temperature on Earth: -128.6°F .

At that temperature, boiling water can freeze in mid-air. Eyelashes turn icy in seconds. The air is so dry and frigid that metal can become brittle and break just from touch.

Only a few research teams stay year-round in Antarctica, and Vostok Station is one of the most remote places on the planet. The team that recorded the temperature wore layered suits, heated gloves, and thick face masks. Even stepping outside required permission and planning.

The temperature was so low, it confirmed predictions from satellite sensors and helped scientists study how Earth's poles affect weather patterns around the globe.

Today, the record still stands—and no one's tried breaking it.

Questions:

- 1.** Where was the coldest temperature on Earth recorded?
- 2.** What was the temperature, and what happens at that level of cold?
- 3.** What challenges do researchers face in Antarctica?
- 4.** Why was this discovery important to science?
- 5.** What equipment helps scientists survive there?

Reading 2: The Surprise Pen Pal Project

Ava's writing assignment was to write a letter to a student in another country. Her homeschool group had signed up for an international pen pal exchange.

Ava was matched with Léa from France. At first, Ava didn't know what to write. "Hi, I'm Ava, and I like waffles" didn't feel like a strong introduction.

But over time, their letters became more creative. They shared photos of their pets, told jokes, sent recipes, and even exchanged drawings.

Ava learned that Léa was learning English while she was learning French. They corrected each other's grammar and laughed over awkward mistakes.

After a few months, Ava had filled an entire folder with letters, postcards, and stickers.

"Pen pals are basically long-distance best friends," she wrote in her journal.

Questions:

1. What assignment did Ava receive?
2. Who was she paired with?
3. What did they share in their letters?
4. How did writing to Léa help Ava learn?
5. What did Ava realize by the end of the project?

Grade 6 – Week 8

Reading 1: Can Animals Sense Natural Disasters?

Before a major earthquake hit Japan in 2011, locals noticed something strange—dogs were barking at nothing, cats were hiding in closets, and even zoo animals were restless.

It wasn't the first time. Throughout history, people have reported animals acting oddly before earthquakes, tsunamis, and storms.

Scientists now believe that animals may sense vibrations, pressure changes, or magnetic shifts before humans can. Birds often fly away before storms. Some elephants move inland before a tsunami hits.

However, not all scientists agree. It's difficult to prove, and not every animal reacts.

Still, emergency teams in some countries now watch animal behavior as one of many signals for early warnings.

It may not be perfect science—but animals just might know something we don't.

Questions:

- 1.** What strange behavior was noticed before the 2011 earthquake in Japan?
- 2.** What are some examples of animals reacting to danger?
- 3.** What might animals be sensing before a disaster?
- 4.** Why is this hard to prove scientifically?
- 5.** How are some teams using animal behavior today?

Reading 2: The Cardboard Castle

Jonah and his younger siblings had a huge pile of cardboard from online packages. Instead of throwing it out, their mom challenged them to build something.

“A castle,” Jonah said. “With towers, a drawbridge, and space for snacks.”

For a week, they designed, measured, taped, and cut. The living room became a construction zone. They used toilet paper rolls as lookout towers, made curtains out of old T-shirts, and built trapdoors that led to cookie storage.

They even made a family flag and wrote a rulebook. Rule #1: No dragons allowed (unless they bring snacks).

When it was done, their mom took pictures and let them keep it up for two more weeks. It became the reading corner, snack zone, and homeschool break space.

“I’ve never loved cardboard so much,” Jonah said.

Questions:

- 1.** What challenge did Jonah’s mom give them?
- 2.** What did the kids decide to build?
- 3.** What creative materials did they use?
- 4.** What purpose did the castle serve afterward?
- 5.** What does this story show about creativity and reuse?

Grade 6 – Week 9

Reading 1: The City That Sinks

Venice, Italy, is one of the most famous cities in the world—built on water, filled with boats instead of cars, and lined with canals that wind between ancient buildings. But Venice faces a growing problem: it's sinking.

The city is built on wooden pilings driven into mud centuries ago. Over time, the ground beneath Venice has compacted, causing the city to slowly sink. At the same time, sea levels are rising due to climate change, making floods more frequent.

To fight back, engineers designed a system called MOSE—huge underwater barriers that rise up to block high tides during storms. It's one of the most ambitious flood protection systems ever built.

Even with this technology, Venice's future is uncertain. Citizens, scientists, and historians are working together to protect this unique city. Some say Venice is a symbol of how cities worldwide must adapt to survive in a changing climate.

Questions:

- 1.** What is causing Venice to sink?
- 2.** What additional environmental issue is making things worse?
- 3.** What is MOSE, and how does it help Venice?
- 4.** Why is Venice considered a symbol of change?
- 5.** What efforts are being made to protect the city?

Reading 2: The Forgotten Folder

Sophie had just finished typing her final project on marine biology. It included labeled diagrams, colorful headings, and a bibliography that took her an hour. She saved it in her “Projects” folder, double-checked everything, and went to bed proud.

The next morning, she opened the laptop to show her mom. But the file was gone.

She panicked. No folder. No backup. No nothing.

Frustrated, Sophie spent twenty minutes searching, nearly in tears. Then her mom sat down beside her and said, “Let’s retrace your steps.” They found the folder— not in “Projects,” but inside a different folder called “Recipes.” Apparently, Sophie had used that folder to save a cupcake file months ago and accidentally reused it.

Relieved and laughing, she renamed the folder “DO NOT LOSE THIS” and made three backups.

Later, Sophie gave a great presentation and shared the story at the end. “Lesson learned,” she said. “Always double-check where you save your stuff.”

Questions:

- 1.** What project was Sophie working on?
- 2.** What problem did she face the next day?
- 3.** How did her mom help her solve it?
- 4.** What mistake did Sophie make?
- 5.** What lesson did she learn?

Grade 6 – Week 10

Reading 1: How Satellites Help Farmers

When you think of satellites, you might picture space missions or weather reports. But satellites also play an important role in farming.

Modern satellites can take high-resolution images of fields, showing soil conditions, plant health, and moisture levels. This helps farmers know exactly where to plant, water, or add fertilizer. Instead of treating every acre the same, they can target specific areas that need attention—saving time, water, and money.

Some satellites use thermal imaging to detect drought stress before a plant even shows signs of damage. Others measure crop growth throughout the season.

This is called “precision agriculture,” and it’s changing how food is grown around the world. Thanks to space technology, farmers are able to make smarter decisions, improve yields, and protect the environment by reducing waste.

It’s a reminder that space science isn’t just for astronauts—it’s helping to grow the food on our plates.

Questions:

- 1.** What role do satellites play in farming today?
- 2.** What is “precision agriculture”?
- 3.** How do thermal images help farmers?
- 4.** What are some benefits of using satellite data?
- 5.** Why is this technology important for the future of food?

Reading 2: The Treehouse Agreement

Noah had always dreamed of having a treehouse. His best friend Leo had one, and they spent hours in it drawing comics, eating popcorn, and imagining they were explorers.

So Noah asked his parents if he could build one too. They agreed—but with conditions.

First, Noah had to research treehouse safety. Second, he had to design it and build a model. Third, he had to promise to take care of the tree, which was an old oak in their backyard.

Noah took it seriously. He watched videos, sketched blueprints, and even gave a “presentation” to his parents showing his plan, complete with a rope ladder, a reading nook, and a spot for birdwatching.

His parents were impressed. With their help, they started building. It took several weekends, lots of measuring, and one minor hammer injury.

When it was finished, Noah sat up in the treehouse with a snack and a journal. He wrote, *Earned it*.

Questions:

1. What did Noah want to build?
2. What conditions did his parents set?
3. How did Noah prepare for the project?
4. What did he include in his design?
5. How did he feel once it was finished?

Grade 6 – Week 11

Reading 1: What's at the Bottom of the Ocean?

Even though over 70% of Earth is covered in water, we've only explored about 5% of the ocean floor. That means the deep ocean is still one of the most mysterious places on Earth.

In recent years, scientists have used submarines, underwater drones, and sonar to discover giant underwater mountains, deep trenches, and bizarre creatures that glow in the dark. These bioluminescent animals use light to attract prey, confuse predators, or communicate.

In 2020, researchers even found a coral reef taller than the Empire State Building off the coast of Australia. That's just one example of how little we know about the world beneath the waves.

Why is the deep ocean so hard to explore? The pressure is intense, the water is freezing cold, and sunlight doesn't reach past a certain depth.

Still, with new technology, we're uncovering amazing secrets about this vast underwater world—one dive at a time.

Questions:

- 1.** How much of the ocean floor has been explored?
- 2.** What tools are used to explore the deep ocean?
- 3.** What are bioluminescent animals, and why are they interesting?
- 4.** What surprising discovery was made in 2020?
- 5.** Why is exploring the deep ocean difficult?

Reading 2: The Great Pancake Disaster

It was Saturday morning, and Ava wanted to surprise her family with pancakes. She had watched her mom do it a hundred times. How hard could it be?

She measured flour, eggs, and milk—but forgot the baking powder. She also turned the stove up way too high. The first pancake burned, the second one stuck, and the third folded in half like a taco.

Smoke filled the kitchen, and the dog barked.

Her mom came in and gently took over. “You’re learning. That’s how good cooks are made.”

They made a new batch together—golden, fluffy, perfect. Ava added blueberries and powdered sugar.

She wrote in her journal: *Next time, I’ll double-check the recipe. Also, don’t cook on ‘volcano heat.’*

Questions:

1. What did Ava try to do for her family?
2. What mistakes did she make?
3. How did her mom respond?
4. What happened when they cooked together?
5. What lesson did Ava learn?

Grade 6 – Week 12

Reading 1: Why Bats Are Important

Bats often get a bad reputation—they're associated with caves, darkness, and spooky stories. But in reality, bats are one of the most helpful animals on the planet.

Many bats eat insects—thousands each night! This helps farmers avoid using harmful pesticides. Some bats pollinate flowers and spread seeds, especially in tropical forests. Without bats, certain plants wouldn't grow.

Despite this, bat populations are declining. Habitat loss, disease, and fear from humans are big threats. One disease, called white-nose syndrome, has killed millions of bats in North America.

Scientists and conservation groups are working to protect bat habitats and educate the public. Some even build bat houses so bats can live safely near farms and homes.

Next time you see a bat, don't be afraid. Think of it as a tiny superhero doing nighttime chores.

Questions:

- 1.** How do bats help farmers and the environment?
- 2.** What types of food do bats eat?
- 3.** What threats are bats facing today?
- 4.** What is white-nose syndrome?
- 5.** What are people doing to protect bats?

Reading 2: The Comic Book Pitch

Micah loved drawing superheroes. For months, he worked on a homemade comic called “Captain Comet,” about a boy who discovers he can bend light and zip across galaxies.

When the local library announced a young creator contest, Micah entered. He printed copies, made a cover, and practiced describing the story in case someone asked.

At the event, he stood next to kids with videos, poems, and giant sculptures. He felt nervous—but when someone picked up his comic and laughed at the jokes, Micah relaxed.

A librarian said, “This is really creative. Would you like to put copies in the kids’ section?”

Micah nodded so hard his glasses slipped off.

Later, he spotted a kid reading his comic and smiling. It wasn’t just about superheroes anymore. It was about confidence.

Questions:

- 1.** What project did Micah work on?
- 2.** What was his comic about?
- 3.** What event did he participate in?
- 4.** How did others react to his work?
- 5.** What did this experience teach Micah?

Grade 6 – Week 13

Reading 1: The Phone That Charges with Walking

What if you could charge your phone just by walking?

That's exactly what scientists have been working on. A new kind of shoe insole has been designed that can generate electricity as you move. Inside the insole are tiny devices that turn movement into energy—something called piezoelectricity.

Piezoelectricity means that when certain materials are pressed or bent, they create a small electric current. These insoles could store energy in a battery as you walk, jog, or run. Some models are already powerful enough to charge a smartwatch or send emergency texts.

This invention is especially helpful in places without steady access to electricity. It also shows how energy can be harvested from everyday movement. As technology improves, shoes might become power sources for more than just feet.

It's one more example of how science is working to make life both smarter and simpler.

Questions:

- 1.** What is piezoelectricity?
- 2.** How do the shoe insoles work to generate electricity?
- 3.** What are some real-life uses for this technology?
- 4.** Why is this useful in places with limited electricity?
- 5.** How might this invention change future gadgets?

Reading 2: The Great Chicken Coop Rescue

Lila's backyard chicken coop was her pride and joy. She had built it from scratch with her mom, and the hens inside each had names like Dottie, Fluffy, and Queen Beak.

One windy night, Lila heard loud banging and rushed outside. The door to the coop had blown open, and the hens were nowhere in sight.

Armed with a flashlight and her pajama robe, she searched the yard, whispering their names like they were lost pets.

She found Fluffy under the slide, Dottie behind the shed, and Queen Beak proudly perched on the porch railing like she owned the place.

It took over an hour, but Lila rounded them up, fixed the door, and tucked them back in.

The next day, she installed a latch upgrade and declared herself "The Chicken Rescuer of 6th Grade."

Questions:

- 1.** What happened to Lila's chicken coop?
- 2.** How did she respond to the situation?
- 3.** Where did she find her chickens?
- 4.** What did she do to prevent it from happening again?
- 5.** What does this story show about responsibility?

Grade 6 – Week 14

Reading 1: What Is a Carbon Footprint?

You've probably heard the term "carbon footprint," but what does it actually mean?

A carbon footprint is the total amount of greenhouse gases—especially carbon dioxide—that are released into the atmosphere because of your actions. Everything from driving a car to charging a phone uses energy, and some of that energy comes from burning fossil fuels, which release carbon.

Even the food we eat and the clothes we buy contribute. For example, a hamburger has a bigger carbon footprint than a salad because raising cattle uses more land, water, and feed.

People can reduce their carbon footprints by doing simple things: turning off lights, walking or biking instead of driving, recycling, and buying less plastic. Schools, families, and cities are also making changes to help the environment.

Understanding your carbon footprint doesn't mean being perfect—it means being aware, making smart choices, and knowing that even small actions add up.

Questions:

- 1.** What is a carbon footprint?
- 2.** What kinds of activities contribute to it?
- 3.** How does eating different foods affect your footprint?
- 4.** What are some ways people can reduce their carbon output?
- 5.** Why is it important to understand this concept?

Reading 2: The Notebook in the Attic

Micah and his sister were helping their grandma clean out her attic when they found a dusty old notebook.

It wasn't labeled, but inside were dozens of hand-drawn maps, lists of "secret codes," and one page titled *Operation Apple Pie*.

"This was my adventure journal when I was your age," Grandma said, laughing.

She explained that as kids, she and her brother used to turn their backyard into "spy territory," and each map showed where they hid walkie-talkies and buried time capsules.

Micah flipped through the pages with awe. "You were basically a secret agent!"

They spent the afternoon reading more pages and even tried following one of the maps. They didn't find treasure, but they found an old spoon with their great-uncle's initials carved in it.

Sometimes the best stories are the ones hidden in your own attic.

Questions:

1. What did Micah and his sister find in the attic?
2. Who had written in the notebook, and what was it used for?
3. What kinds of things were included in the journal?
4. What did they find when following one of the maps?
5. What does this story suggest about family memories?

Grade 6 – Week 15

Reading 1: How Bees Keep Our Food Growing

Bees do more than make honey—they're some of the world's most important pollinators.

Pollination happens when pollen moves from one flower to another, helping plants grow fruits and seeds. Bees visit flowers to collect nectar and pollen. As they move from plant to plant, they accidentally spread pollen, which helps plants reproduce.

About one-third of the food we eat relies on pollinators like bees, including apples, almonds, blueberries, and cucumbers. Without bees, many foods would become rare or disappear altogether.

Unfortunately, bee populations are declining due to pesticides, habitat loss, and disease. Some people are starting backyard gardens filled with bee-friendly plants. Others are keeping bees in small urban hives to help support their survival.

Helping bees helps the entire food system. The next time you eat a strawberry, you might want to thank a bee.

Questions:

- 1.** What is pollination, and how do bees help with it?
- 2.** Why are bees important to human food supply?
- 3.** What are some problems bees are facing?
- 4.** How are people helping bees survive?
- 5.** What message does this passage give about nature and food?

Reading 2: The Surprise Video Call

Sophie's homeschool group was learning about inventors. Her assignment was to research someone and give a short presentation.

She chose Ada Lovelace—the first computer programmer—because she loved math and thought it was cool that Ada lived in the 1800s and still imagined machines that could think.

Sophie made a slideshow with photos, facts, and even a quote. Her mom filmed it to send to the group. What Sophie didn't know was that her mom had also shared it with a distant cousin who worked at a tech company.

A week later, Sophie got a surprise video call from a woman who said, "Hi! I saw your Ada Lovelace presentation and wanted to tell you something—you did a great job."

That woman turned out to be a software engineer who now helps design smart watches. She offered to answer Sophie's questions anytime.

Sophie didn't stop smiling for the rest of the day.

Questions:

- 1.** Who did Sophie choose for her presentation, and why?
- 2.** How did she complete her assignment?
- 3.** What unexpected thing happened after she turned it in?
- 4.** Who reached out to her, and why was that exciting?
- 5.** What lesson can be learned from Sophie's experience?

Grade 6 – Week 16

Reading 1: The Deepest Hole on Earth

In Russia, scientists spent over 20 years drilling the Kola Superdeep Borehole, which became the deepest man-made hole on Earth—reaching more than 40,000 feet down.

They wanted to study Earth’s crust and better understand what lies beneath our feet. Along the way, they discovered unusual rocks, tiny fossils more than 2 billion years old, and temperatures hotter than expected.

Eventually, the drill couldn’t go farther because of the extreme heat—over 350°F—which melted the equipment.

While they didn’t reach the Earth’s core, the project provided valuable information about geology and helped scientists develop better tools.

It also raised questions: What else is hiding deep underground? And could we ever dig even deeper?

Questions:

- 1.** What was the Kola Superdeep Borehole, and why was it created?
- 2.** How deep did the hole go?
- 3.** What surprising discoveries were made?
- 4.** Why did the drilling stop?
- 5.** What does this project teach us about Earth’s crust?

Reading 2: The Lost-and-Found Wallet

Ezra was helping clean up after his homeschool group's end-of-year picnic when he spotted something shiny under the snack table.

It was a small wallet. Inside were a few dollars, a school ID, and a gift card. The ID showed it belonged to someone named Luis, but Ezra didn't recognize the face.

He turned it in to the event organizer, who posted about it on the group's page. No one claimed it for days.

Finally, Ezra asked his mom to drive by the address on the ID. A woman opened the door and gasped. "That's my nephew's! He's been looking for it everywhere."

She thanked Ezra and handed him a cookie from the kitchen. "For doing the right thing," she said.

Ezra smiled. Sometimes honesty is its own reward—but cookies help too.

Questions:

1. What did Ezra find at the picnic?
2. What clues helped him figure out who it belonged to?
3. What steps did he take to return it?
4. Who answered the door, and what did she say?
5. What message does this story share about doing the right thing?

Grade 6 – Week 17

Reading 1: The Plastic-Eating Enzyme

In 2016, scientists in Japan discovered something amazing—bacteria that could break down plastic bottles.

Most plastic takes hundreds of years to decompose, which is why landfills and oceans are filled with it. But this newly discovered bacteria produces an enzyme that actually eats away at plastic and turns it into harmless materials.

Since then, scientists have been studying how to use these enzymes to solve plastic pollution. In labs, they've modified the enzyme to work even faster. A single bottle that would normally take 450 years to break down could be eaten by the enzyme in just days.

This could completely change the future of recycling. Instead of throwing plastic away, we might use enzymes to safely destroy it and even reuse the basic materials.

The discovery reminds us that sometimes, nature holds the solution to the problems we've created.

Questions:

- 1.** What special ability did scientists discover in certain bacteria?
- 2.** Why is this discovery important for the environment?
- 3.** How have scientists improved the enzyme?
- 4.** How could this change the future of recycling?
- 5.** What lesson does this discovery teach us?

Reading 2: The Dog Who Found the Keys

Jonas had a habit of misplacing things. Keys, headphones, even his favorite pen—all lost within minutes of being in his hand.

One morning, after tearing apart the house looking for the car keys, Jonas plopped on the couch with a sigh. “They’re gone. We’re not going anywhere.”

His dog, Baxter, tilted his head. Then he trotted off and returned a minute later with something in his mouth—Jonas’s keys.

Jonas blinked. “You’ve got to be kidding.”

It turned out, Baxter had started noticing where Jonas left things. Over the next week, Jonas tested it. He dropped his phone under a blanket. Baxter found it. He left a shoe in the garage. Baxter brought it to the door.

Jonas made him an official badge: “Lost & Found Department – Baxter.”

Sometimes help comes from the least expected places.

Questions:

- 1.** What problem did Jonas often have?
- 2.** How did Baxter surprise him?
- 3.** What test did Jonas try during the week?
- 4.** How did Jonas thank Baxter?
- 5.** What does this story say about observation and help?

Grade 6 – Week 18

Reading 1: The Library That Floats

In Bangladesh, floods are common during the rainy season. When roads are underwater, kids often can't get to school—and that's where floating libraries come in.

These libraries are actually boats, filled with books and powered by solar panels. They travel through flooded villages, bringing education directly to children. Some even have Wi-Fi and computers for students to use.

The idea started with one boat and has grown to dozens. They also offer classes on health, weather safety, and even how to swim.

For kids in these communities, the library boat isn't just about reading—it's a symbol of hope and progress, even when the roads disappear.

Questions:

- 1.** Why are floating libraries needed in Bangladesh?
- 2.** What features do these library boats have?
- 3.** What types of lessons are offered besides reading?
- 4.** How did this idea begin, and how has it grown?
- 5.** What does the library boat represent to the children?

Reading 2: The Backyard Fossil

When Nora was digging in her backyard to plant a new flower, she hit something hard. At first, she thought it was a rock. But after rinsing it off, she saw ridges and spiral patterns.

Her dad thought it looked like a fossil, so they brought it to the local science museum. The paleontologist smiled. "That's an ammonite. It's around 100 million years old."

Nora stared. Something that ancient had been under her backyard this whole time?

She created a display box with a label and showed it to her homeschool group. Now, every time she digs in the yard, she wonders what other stories the ground might tell.

Questions:

- 1.** What did Nora discover while digging?
- 2.** How did she learn it was a fossil?
- 3.** What kind of fossil was it, and how old was it?
- 4.** What did she do with it afterward?
- 5.** What curiosity did this experience spark in Nora?

Grade 6 – Week 19

Reading 1: How Mirrors Helped Space Telescopes See

When you look at the stars through a telescope, you're really just catching ancient light.

Telescopes use mirrors to collect light from faraway objects and focus it into a picture. The bigger the mirror, the more light it can collect—and the farther it can see.

The James Webb Space Telescope uses a giant gold-plated mirror made of 18 hexagon-shaped panels. Together, they unfold in space like a puzzle and allow scientists to look at galaxies that are over 13 billion years old.

Unlike regular telescopes, this one works in infrared, which means it can see heat and light invisible to human eyes. It's helping scientists understand how stars and planets are born.

All thanks to a set of mirrors floating in space, aimed at the very beginning of time.

Questions:

- 1.** How do mirrors help telescopes work?
- 2.** What is special about the James Webb Space Telescope's mirror?
- 3.** What kind of light does it detect?
- 4.** What are scientists using this telescope to study?
- 5.** Why is this invention important to science?

Reading 2: The Lawn Mower Challenge

Twelve-year-old Caleb wanted to earn money to buy his own tablet. His parents wouldn't just give it to him—they encouraged him to work for it.

So Caleb made flyers offering lawn mowing services and passed them around the neighborhood. He started with one house. Then two. By the third week, he had a full schedule and was waking up early to get lawns done before the Florida heat kicked in.

He learned to clean his tools, track his earnings, and bring cold water for long days. He even offered to rake leaves at no extra charge.

In five weeks, he bought the tablet. But more importantly, he said, "I learned how to work like a grown-up—and sweat like one too."

Questions:

1. What goal did Caleb have, and how did he plan to reach it?
2. How did he start and grow his small business?
3. What lessons did he learn about hard work?
4. What extra things did he offer to customers?
5. How did Caleb feel about his experience?

Grade 6 – Week 20

Reading 1: The Oldest Living Tree

In the mountains of California, high above the desert, grows one of the oldest living trees in the world—a bristlecone pine named Methuselah.

Scientists believe it is more than 4,800 years old. That means it was growing before the pyramids in Egypt were built!

Bristlecone pines grow slowly and survive harsh conditions—cold, dry, and windy. Their twisted trunks and exposed roots show how they’ve battled storms, snow, and time itself.

The exact location of Methuselah is kept secret to protect it. Other trees nearby are also thousands of years old, creating what some call “the oldest forest on Earth.”

These trees are a reminder of nature’s quiet strength and the stories that only time can tell.

Questions:

- 1.** What kind of tree is Methuselah, and how old is it?
- 2.** What makes bristlecone pines so special?
- 3.** Why is the location of the tree kept secret?
- 4.** How do these trees survive in harsh environments?
- 5.** What message does this passage share about nature?

Reading 2: The Clumsy Cook-Off

Jasmine loved baking, but she wasn't exactly graceful. At her homeschool co-op's cooking competition, she wore an apron, tied her hair back, and immediately dropped a measuring cup into the batter.

Then she spilled sugar. Then flour. Then a spoon got stuck in the mixer.

But she kept going. Laughing, adjusting, and wiping flour from her face.

Her cinnamon rolls came out slightly lopsided—but smelled amazing. When the judges tasted them, one said, "They're not pretty, but they're delicious."

Jasmine didn't win first place, but she won the "Best Recovery" award and got a ribbon with glitter glue spelling: *Never Give Up*.

Questions:

1. What event was Jasmine participating in?
2. What mistakes did she make while cooking?
3. How did she respond to the challenges?
4. What was the final result of her baking?
5. What message does this story teach about perseverance?

Grade 6 – Week 21

Reading 1: The Super Coral Solution

Coral reefs are some of the most colorful and diverse ecosystems on the planet. They support thousands of species and protect coastlines from erosion. But rising ocean temperatures are causing corals to bleach and die—leaving behind ghostly white skeletons where vibrant coral once thrived.

Scientists have started experimenting with “super corals.” These are corals that can survive in warmer water. Some are naturally tough, while others are grown in labs and trained to adapt to stressful conditions.

Once the stronger corals are ready, divers transplant them into damaged reefs to help revive the ecosystem. In some areas, this has helped marine life return.

The work is still new, and many challenges remain. But super coral might offer hope for saving reefs around the world—if humans act quickly.

Questions:

- 1.** What is causing coral reefs to bleach and die?
- 2.** What are “super corals,” and how are they different?
- 3.** How are these corals being used to help ocean ecosystems?
- 4.** What signs of success have scientists seen so far?
- 5.** Why is this work urgent?

Reading 2: The Case of the Disappearing Sandwiches

Every Wednesday, Liam and his siblings packed lunch and spent the afternoon at a homeschool science club. But for three weeks in a row, Liam's sandwich went missing.

At first, he blamed his younger brother. Then he thought maybe he forgot to pack it. But when it happened again—his sandwich wrapper gone, crumbs left behind—he decided to solve the case.

He placed a small sticker inside the wrapper that said "This sandwich belongs to Liam." Then he watched the food table during club.

Just before lunch, he saw Mr. Tomlin, the janitor, cleaning nearby. He picked up Liam's lunch bag and muttered, "Wonder who left this again."

Liam gently explained it wasn't trash—it was his lunch. Mr. Tomlin apologized and offered him a granola bar.

From then on, Liam added a sticky note on his lunchbox: "Not garbage. Delicious."

Questions:

- 1.** What problem was Liam having with his lunches?
- 2.** What clues made him suspicious?
- 3.** How did he investigate the mystery?
- 4.** Who was taking the sandwich, and why?
- 5.** What did Liam do to prevent future mix-ups?

Grade 6 – Week 22

Reading 1: How Do Planes Fly?

Airplanes are heavy machines—some weighing over 800,000 pounds—so how do they stay in the air?

It all comes down to four forces: lift, weight, thrust, and drag.

Lift is created by the shape of the wings. As air moves faster over the curved top of the wing and slower underneath, pressure decreases above the wing and increases below it. That upward pressure lifts the plane.

Thrust is the forward force created by engines or propellers. Weight pulls the plane down, and drag is the air resistance that pushes back as it moves forward.

Pilots control all of this with flaps, rudders, and engines. It's a careful balance. When done right, it turns tons of metal into something that can glide through the sky.

Questions:

- 1.** What are the four forces involved in flight?
- 2.** How do airplane wings create lift?
- 3.** What roles do thrust and drag play in flying?
- 4.** How do pilots manage these forces?
- 5.** Why is understanding this balance important?

Reading 2: The Window Seat Debate

Ella and her twin brother Noah always argued over who got the window seat during long car rides.

This time, they made a deal. Every 30 minutes, they'd switch. Noah started in the window seat, but Ella kept reminding him when it was time. "Five more minutes," he said. Then again. Then again.

After an hour, Ella folded her arms and stared at the seatbelt buckle.

Their mom pulled over at a rest stop. "New rule," she said. "Next ride, one of you gets the window all the way there. The other gets it all the way back. We'll switch every trip."

Ella and Noah agreed. And surprisingly, when it was Ella's turn next trip, she said, "It's okay. You can have it today."

Noah blinked. "Seriously?"

She smiled. "I just want snacks first."

Questions:

1. What did Ella and Noah argue about?
2. How did they try to solve the issue at first?
3. Why didn't the first plan work?
4. What new solution did their mom suggest?
5. What does Ella's final choice say about compromise?

Grade 6 – Week 23

Reading 1: The Day the Internet Went Down

One Tuesday morning, the entire internet service went down in Ava’s neighborhood. No email. No videos. No math practice website.

At first, she panicked. How would she finish her online assignment?

But after ten minutes of pacing, Ava sat down with a notebook and started writing by hand. She summarized a science chapter and drew a diagram. Then she helped her brother with flashcards. Then she baked muffins with her mom—without using a recipe video.

By evening, she had filled two notebook pages, made a snack, and finished three chores.

When the internet returned the next day, Ava had a surprise. “That was actually kind of fun,” she said. “Let’s have one screen-free day a week.”

Her mom nearly dropped her coffee.

Questions:

- 1.** What happened in Ava’s neighborhood?
- 2.** How did she respond at first?
- 3.** What activities did she end up doing instead of going online?
- 4.** What did she learn from the experience?
- 5.** Why was her mom surprised at the end?

Reading 2: How Sound Travels

Have you ever wondered how sound reaches your ears?

Sound travels in waves. When something vibrates—like a guitar string or your vocal cords—it moves the air around it. These vibrations create waves that move through the air, water, or even solid materials.

When the waves reach your ears, they hit your eardrum, which vibrates too. Those vibrations are sent to the brain, where they're translated into sounds you recognize—like a bark, a bell, or your name being called.

Sound travels fastest through solids, then liquids, and slowest through gases. That's why you can hear a train coming by putting your ear on the tracks before it's close.

Sound waves also bounce, which creates echoes. And if the wave is strong enough, like during a concert, you might even feel it in your chest.

It's a reminder that sound isn't just something you hear—it's something you feel.

Questions:

- 1.** How is sound created?
- 2.** What role does vibration play in hearing?
- 3.** How does sound travel through different materials?
- 4.** Why do we sometimes feel sound as well as hear it?
- 5.** What are echoes, and how are they formed?

Grade 6 – Week 24

Reading 1: The Homemade Raft

Caleb and his cousins spent a week at the lake every summer. This year, they decided to build a raft from old barrels, rope, and wooden boards.

It took three days of measuring, hammering, tying knots, and testing ideas. On day four, they pushed it into the water—and it immediately tilted to the left.

Laughing, they pulled it out and added more barrels.

By the end of the week, they had a working raft that could hold three kids and a cooler full of sandwiches. They paddled around like explorers.

When it was time to leave, Caleb wrote in his journal: *We didn't just float. We built something together.*

Questions:

1. What project did Caleb and his cousins work on?
2. What materials did they use?
3. What problem did they face, and how did they fix it?
4. What did they do with the finished raft?
5. What made the project meaningful?

Reading 2: The Seed Vault

Deep in the mountains of Norway, there's a place that looks like something from a science fiction movie—but it's real. It's called the Global Seed Vault.

Inside this vault, millions of seeds from all over the world are stored in frozen chambers. These seeds include rice, corn, wheat, and rare plants from tropical rainforests.

Why store seeds underground in a frozen cave? In case of natural disasters, wars, or crop failures, scientists can use the seeds to regrow important plants and protect food supplies.

It's often called the "doomsday vault," but it's really about hope—making sure that future generations can still grow food, no matter what happens.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the Global Seed Vault?
- 2.** What kinds of seeds are stored there?
- 3.** Why is it located in a cold, remote place?
- 4.** How could the vault help in a crisis?
- 5.** What message does this project send about the future?

Grade 6 – Week 25

Reading 1: The City That Runs on Trash

In Sweden, there's a city where garbage doesn't go to waste—it powers homes.

The city of Västerås has developed a system where trash is burned in a clean energy facility to generate electricity and heat. This process is called “waste-to-energy.” Every year, they convert tons of garbage into usable power, reducing the need for landfills.

In fact, Sweden has gotten so good at this, they now import trash from other countries that don't recycle or process waste well. Trucks bring in garbage, and it's sorted, burned, and turned into heat for thousands of homes.

Of course, not all waste can or should be burned. Hazardous materials and plastics still pose challenges. But cities like Västerås show how thinking differently about trash can help fight pollution and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels.

Instead of seeing garbage as the end of something, they see it as the start of something new.

Questions:

- 1.** What is “waste-to-energy,” and how does it work?
- 2.** How has the city of Västerås used this system successfully?
- 3.** Why does Sweden import trash from other countries?
- 4.** What are the limits or challenges of burning waste?
- 5.** What lesson can we learn about how we view garbage?

Reading 2: The Birthday Hike

For her twelfth birthday, Kayla didn't want a party or presents. She asked her parents for one thing: to go on a long hike to the top of Eagle's Rock with just her family.

They packed snacks, water, and a small picnic lunch. The trail was steep, the air was cool, and birds chirped from tree branches. Kayla's younger brother complained about the climb, but she kept him moving with jokes and silly songs.

Near the top, the path narrowed. One side dropped sharply into trees below. Kayla took a deep breath and helped her brother across. Finally, they reached the summit. From there, they could see the whole valley—towns, fields, even their neighborhood in the distance.

They sat on the rocks and ate sandwiches. Her mom lit a single candle on a cupcake, and they sang.

Kayla didn't say much, but she felt full of something bigger than words. The wind, the view, the effort—it all felt like a memory that would stick.

Later in her journal she wrote, *That was the best birthday. It was like climbing into a memory while it was still being made.*

Questions:

1. What did Kayla choose to do for her birthday?
2. What challenges did the family face during the hike?
3. How did Kayla help her younger brother?
4. What made the experience special for her?
5. What does her journal entry reveal about how she felt?

Grade 6 – Week 26

Reading 1: The Language of Whales

Whales are some of the most intelligent and mysterious creatures on Earth—and they may have their own form of language.

Scientists have recorded the calls of sperm whales, which produce clicking sounds called “codas.” These clicks vary in rhythm and pattern, and whales seem to use them to identify each other, share location, or warn of danger.

Some researchers believe codas work like words or even sentences. Whale families have their own dialects—just like human accents. In the Caribbean, one group of whales clicks in a pattern researchers haven’t heard anywhere else.

To study this, scientists use underwater microphones and artificial intelligence. They’re trying to figure out how much meaning is in the clicks—and whether we might one day “talk” to whales through technology.

So far, we haven’t cracked the code. But every new click adds to the possibility that we’re not the only species with complex communication.

Questions:

- 1.** What are “codas,” and how do whales use them?
- 2.** What evidence suggests whales may have dialects?
- 3.** How are scientists studying whale communication?
- 4.** What is the goal of this research?
- 5.** What makes this discovery exciting or important?

Reading 2: The Unwritten Play

Eli loved reading plays. Not just watching them—reading the scripts, imagining the scenes, and picturing the lines in his head. So when his homeschool group announced a spring play, he was excited.

Until he learned they'd be doing a musical about pizza.

He didn't mind pizza, but he didn't want to sing about pepperoni. So he came up with a different idea: What if he wrote his own short play, something fun and thoughtful, and performed it at the end-of-year talent show?

He stayed up late for two weeks writing. His play was called *The Lost Shoes of Time*, about a kid who finds a pair of sneakers that transport him to different moments in history—but only for five minutes at a time.

He asked his friends to play roles. They practiced in his garage with cardboard props and sound effects from a phone app. On the day of the show, the audience laughed, clapped, and even leaned forward during the quiet scenes.

Afterward, someone asked, "Where did you get that play?"

Eli smiled. "It wasn't written. Until I wrote it."

Questions:

1. What was Eli's initial reaction to the spring musical?
2. How did he come up with a new plan?
3. What was the plot of his original play?
4. How did they prepare and perform it?
5. What does the ending quote tell us about creativity?

Grade 6 – Week 27

Reading 1: The Solar Oven Experiment

For a homeschool science project, Mia decided to make a solar oven.

She used a pizza box, aluminum foil, plastic wrap, and black construction paper. She placed marshmallows and chocolate inside and aimed the box at the sun.

At first, nothing happened. She adjusted the angle. Still nothing.

But after thirty minutes, the chocolate softened. Then the marshmallows. Then... gooey perfection.

Mia wrote a report explaining how the black paper absorbed heat, how the foil reflected sunlight, and how the plastic wrap trapped warmth like a greenhouse.

The best part? She had dessert to go with her science lesson.

Her younger brother asked, “Can we cook pizza in it next?”

“Only if you’re very, very patient,” she said.

Questions:

- 1.** What materials did Mia use to build her solar oven?
- 2.** What scientific concepts made it work?
- 3.** What was the result of her experiment?
- 4.** How did she record what she learned?
- 5.** Why was this project both educational and fun?

Reading 2: Why Trees Talk to Each Other

Trees can't speak—but in some ways, they do communicate.

Underneath the forest floor is a vast web of fungi called mycorrhizae. This network connects tree roots, allowing them to send tiny signals, share nutrients, and even warn each other of danger.

Scientists call this the “wood wide web.”

If one tree is attacked by insects, it can send a chemical signal through the network, alerting nearby trees to increase their defenses. Older trees can also share carbon with younger trees that need help growing.

This cooperation makes forests stronger and more resilient. It's not just survival of the fittest—it's survival of the connected.

So next time you walk through the woods, remember: those trees may be silent, but they're not alone.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the mycorrhizal network?
- 2.** How do trees communicate through it?
- 3.** What kinds of signals or help can trees share?
- 4.** Why is this system important for forest health?
- 5.** What idea does the phrase “survival of the connected” suggest?

Grade 6 – Week 28

Reading 1: The Recycled Rocket

Landon loved anything with rockets. When his parents challenged him to build something for homeschool STEM week using only recycled materials, he already had a plan.

He gathered an old soda bottle, cardboard fins, a balloon, and some string. After a few online tutorials and a lot of trial and error, he created a balloon-powered bottle rocket.

His launch system used air pressure: blow up the balloon, attach it to the rocket, and let it go.

The first launch hit a tree. The second hit the side of the house. The third... soared across the yard.

At the science showcase, Landon explained how thrust, air pressure, and recycled parts made it all work.

“That’s rocket science,” he said with a grin.

Questions:

- 1.** What challenge did Landon accept for STEM week?
- 2.** What materials did he use to build his rocket?
- 3.** How did his design create movement?
- 4.** What did he learn through trial and error?
- 5.** What made the project both scientific and creative?

Reading 2: The Book Without Pictures

Harper's favorite books were always full of illustrations. She liked comics, picture books, and graphic novels.

But one day, at the library, her mom handed her a thick chapter book with no pictures at all. "Try this," she said.

Harper sighed but opened the first page. It was about a girl her age who moved to a new town and discovered a hidden garden.

By page five, she was curious. By page ten, she forgot there were no pictures. By page thirty, she could *see* the garden in her mind.

When she finished, she hugged the book.

"It was like watching a movie in my brain," she told her mom. "But I got to direct it."

Questions:

1. What kind of books did Harper usually enjoy?
2. How did she feel about the new book at first?
3. What changed as she started reading?
4. How did her imagination play a role in enjoying the story?
5. What does this tell us about the power of reading?

Grade 6 – Week 29

Reading 1: The Paperclip Invention That Changed Everything

Sometimes the smallest inventions make the biggest difference. Take the paperclip—just a thin loop of metal—but it holds our papers, schoolwork, and notes together every day. Where did it come from?

While people have been trying to fasten papers for centuries, the modern paperclip design was patented in the late 1800s. A Norwegian inventor named Johan Vaaler created one of the earliest versions. However, the more familiar “Gem” paperclip design—still used today—was likely made in Britain.

The genius of the paperclip is in its simplicity. It doesn’t tear paper. It can be reused. And it doesn’t require glue, pins, or staples. During World War II, Norwegians even wore paperclips on their clothing as a quiet symbol of resistance—showing unity against Nazi occupation.

Today, there are museums with giant paperclip sculptures and artists who use them in creative ways. So the next time you use one, remember: that little piece of wire has a long and clever history.

Questions:

1. Who was Johan Vaaler, and what did he invent?
2. Why is the paperclip considered a “simple” invention?
3. How was the paperclip used during World War II?
4. What makes the Gem design so long-lasting?
5. What lesson does the paperclip teach us about innovation?

Reading 2: The Home Arcade

Diego loved video games, but his family didn't own a console. So when he found an old TV at a garage sale and a box of wires in his dad's workshop, he had an idea.

He searched online for tutorials on how to make a homemade arcade setup using a computer keyboard, a cardboard box, and free coding software. He spent three weeks building it. First, he mapped the controls using spare buttons. Then he loaded classic games—ones his dad used to play in the 1980s.

On Saturday, he invited his cousins over. The box looked like a spaceship dashboard, but when they played together, no one cared that it was made from duct tape and old parts.

Diego's dad walked by and smiled. "When I was your age, I put together a radio from spare parts," he said.

Diego grinned. "Guess building runs in the family."

Questions:

- 1.** What did Diego want to build, and why?
- 2.** What materials did he use to create his project?
- 3.** How did he learn what to do?
- 4.** What made the project successful despite being homemade?
- 5.** What did Diego's dad reveal about his own childhood?

Grade 6 – Week 30

Reading 1: Why Do Animals Migrate?

Each year, millions of animals travel incredible distances. Birds fly across continents. Caribou trek through snow. Even butterflies flutter thousands of miles. Why?

Migration helps animals survive. They move to find food, avoid harsh weather, or reach safer places to raise their young. Some birds follow warmer temperatures; others return to exact places year after year—using the stars, Earth’s magnetic field, or even smells to guide them.

The Arctic tern, for example, flies from the North Pole to the South Pole and back every year—more than 40,000 miles! Monarch butterflies travel in stages, passing through generations as they move north and south.

But migration is getting harder. Cities, pollution, and climate change interrupt these ancient routes. Scientists now track animals with tiny GPS tags to better understand their journeys and protect the paths they need.

Migration isn’t just movement—it’s survival on the move.

Questions:

- 1.** Why do animals migrate?
- 2.** What tools do animals use to navigate their journeys?
- 3.** Describe the journey of the Arctic tern or monarch butterfly.
- 4.** What challenges are modern animals facing during migration?
- 5.** How are scientists helping protect migration routes?

Reading 2: The Unexpected Guitarist

Maya was known in her homeschool co-op as the quiet girl who always carried books. She loved stories, science, and sketching—but she never spoke up in group settings.

So when her name appeared on the talent show list, no one believed it. “Are you sure you want to do this?” her friend asked.

Maya nodded. “I’ve been practicing.”

On the night of the show, she stepped onto the stage holding a small acoustic guitar. Her hands shook a little as she adjusted the strap. Then she strummed the first chord.

The room hushed.

She sang a soft, clear song she had written herself. It told the story of feeling invisible and learning to find your own voice.

When the last note faded, the crowd was silent for a beat—then erupted into applause.

Maya didn’t bow or speak. She just smiled, nodded, and walked offstage holding her guitar like a shield she’d finally learned to use.

Questions:

- 1.** How was Maya usually seen by others?
- 2.** What surprise did she reveal at the talent show?
- 3.** What was her song about?
- 4.** How did the audience react to her performance?
- 5.** What does the guitar symbolize for Maya?

Grade 6 – Week 31

Reading 1: The Great Molasses Flood

In 1919, something very strange happened in Boston—a giant wave of molasses flooded part of the city.

A large storage tank holding over 2 million gallons of molasses burst suddenly on a warm January day. The thick, sticky liquid rushed through the streets like a brown tidal wave, damaging buildings, knocking over railcars, and trapping people and horses.

It was a serious disaster. Twenty-one people died, and over 100 were injured. Cleanup took months. Streets stayed sticky for weeks, and stories say that even decades later, people claimed to smell molasses on hot summer days.

So how did it happen? Investigators later found that the tank was poorly built and never properly tested. Warm temperatures caused the molasses to expand, putting too much pressure on the tank's walls.

Today, the event is a strange but true reminder that even ordinary things—like syrup—can become dangerous when handled carelessly.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the Great Molasses Flood, and when did it happen?
- 2.** What caused the disaster?
- 3.** What kind of damage did it cause in the city?
- 4.** How long did cleanup take, and what strange facts followed?
- 5.** What lesson can be learned from this historical event?

Reading 2: The Orange Cat Mystery

Jude and his sisters lived on a small farm. They had chickens, goats, and a cranky rooster named Elvis. But one spring, something new showed up—a chubby orange cat.

It wasn't theirs. It didn't belong to any neighbors. Yet it came every morning, sat near the porch, and stared at the chickens.

At first, they called it "Pumpkin" and tried to chase it off. But Pumpkin never got too close—just watched. After a week, Jude noticed something: the cat always came around when the hawks circled overhead.

Could it be... protecting the chickens?

One day, Jude saw a hawk dive. Pumpkin sprang from the bushes, hissing and leaping like a superhero. The hawk veered off. The chickens squawked and ran—but none were harmed.

From that day on, Pumpkin became an honorary guard. They built him a small shelter and left scraps of meat as thanks.

He never let the hawks win again.

Questions:

1. What was unusual about the cat that appeared on the farm?
2. How did the family react at first?
3. What role did the cat end up playing?
4. How did Pumpkin protect the chickens?
5. Why did the family come to appreciate him?

Grade 6 – Week 32

Reading 1: The Man Who Planted Trees

Jean Giono once wrote a story about a man who quietly changed the world—by planting trees.

Although the character in his story was fictional, there are real people who've done just that. One such man was Jadav Payeng of India. In 1979, he saw animals dying due to extreme heat and a lack of shade. He began planting trees—one sapling at a time—on a barren island in the Brahmaputra River.

Decades later, that dry patch became a thriving forest of over 1,300 acres, now called the “Molai Forest.” Tigers, elephants, deer, and birds live there today because of one man's determination to make a difference.

Jadav didn't wait for permission. He just got to work. His quiet persistence turned a lifeless space into a living sanctuary.

Big changes often start with small, repeated acts.

Questions:

- 1.** Who was Jadav Payeng, and what did he do?
- 2.** What inspired him to begin planting trees?
- 3.** What is the Molai Forest, and how did it come to be?
- 4.** Why is his work considered important for the environment?
- 5.** What lesson can we learn from his story?

Reading 2: The Freezer Catastrophe

Marley's family had just finished a big grocery shop. They stocked the upright freezer in the garage with meals, meats, veggies, and two gallons of ice cream. With a large family, that freezer was a lifesaver.

Three days later, Marley noticed a puddle on the garage floor. She thought maybe it was water from a spill—until she opened the freezer door.

Everything was soft. Everything smelled. The freezer had stopped working.

She ran inside to tell her mom. What followed was a whirlwind of cooking, grilling, calling neighbors, and trying to save what they could.

They invited three families over for a cookout that night. "We're not losing all this meat!" her dad joked.

By midnight, the freezer was empty and everyone was full. The next morning, Marley's mom put a sticky note on the new freezer: *Check me daily. Love, the food guardian.*

Questions:

1. What happened to Marley's family freezer?
2. How did they discover the problem?
3. What quick decisions did the family make?
4. How did they turn the disaster into something fun?
5. What does the sticky note at the end symbolize?

Grade 6 – Week 33

Reading 1: Can You Hear the Northern Lights?

People travel from all over the world to see the northern lights, or aurora borealis—dancing green and purple lights in the night sky caused by solar particles hitting Earth’s atmosphere.

But here’s something surprising: some people say they can hear them.

Reports of crackling, popping, or soft “swooshing” sounds during intense aurora displays have been made in northern countries for centuries. Scientists used to think it was imagination—how could something 60 miles above Earth make a sound you could hear?

Recent studies suggest the sound may not come from the lights themselves, but from electrical charges building up near the ground when the lights are strong. These charges may create faint sounds—too soft to record clearly, but real enough to be heard in the right conditions.

It’s a reminder that the world still holds mysteries, even in the things we think we understand.

Questions:

- 1.** What are the northern lights, and how are they formed?
- 2.** What unusual experience do some people report?
- 3.** Why did scientists once doubt these reports?
- 4.** What new explanation may support the sounds?
- 5.** What does this suggest about scientific discovery?

Reading 2: The Camping Confession

It was supposed to be the perfect homeschool camping trip. Three families. Two nights. One giant pile of marshmallows.

By midnight, things weren't going so well. Rain pounded the tents, someone had forgotten the lanterns, and a raccoon ran off with the hotdog buns.

In the dark, Layla whispered to her friend, "I wish we were at home in bed."

Then her mom said from the other tent, "Me too."

Laughter broke out. Everyone admitted they were wet, cold, and slightly miserable.

The next day, the sun came out. They dried their socks on tree branches, built a roaring fire, and cooked pancakes on the griddle.

No one wanted to leave.

Layla wrote in her journal: *We didn't get the trip we planned. We got something real instead.*

Questions:

1. What went wrong during the camping trip?
2. How did the group respond to the difficulties?
3. What turned the mood around the next day?
4. What does Layla's journal entry reveal about her experience?
5. Why might a "real" experience be more valuable than a perfect one?

Grade 6 – Week 34

Reading 1: Earthquakes on Other Planets

Earthquakes don't just happen on Earth.

Mars has marsquakes. The Moon has moonquakes. Even Jupiter's moon Io has volcanic tremors that shake its crust.

These aren't just cool facts—they help scientists understand how planets and moons are built. When a planet quakes, it sends vibrations through its interior. Sensors, like NASA's InSight lander on Mars, record these vibrations to map the planet's layers.

On Earth, we know about tectonic plates moving. But on Mars, there are no plates—just shrinking and cracking as the planet cools. On the Moon, many quakes are caused by temperature changes from extreme day and night cycles.

Studying these “spacequakes” gives clues to how our solar system formed. It shows that even in the quiet darkness of space, the ground is always shifting.

Questions:

- 1.** What are marsquakes and moonquakes?
- 2.** How do scientists study them?
- 3.** What causes quakes on different planets and moons?
- 4.** How does this help us learn about planetary structure?
- 5.** What does this teach us about our solar system?

Reading 2: The Dough Disaster

Josie wanted to make homemade bread as part of her homeschool cooking unit. She followed the recipe exactly—or so she thought.

She mixed the flour, sugar, yeast, and salt. Then she added warm water and started kneading.

Everything seemed fine... until the dough didn't rise. After two hours, it still looked like a lump of clay.

Her mom looked at the ingredients and laughed. "Honey, this is baking soda—not yeast."

Josie groaned. "So I basically made salty playdough?"

They tried again—this time with the right ingredient. The second batch rose beautifully. As it baked, the house filled with the smell of fresh bread.

At dinner, her dad took a bite and said, "You're hired."

Josie grinned. "As long as I get paid in carbs."

Questions:

1. What mistake did Josie make in her bread recipe?
2. How did they discover the error?
3. What changed the second time she tried baking?
4. How did her family respond to her success?
5. What does this story teach about learning through mistakes?

Grade 6 – Week 35

Reading 1: The Secret Code in Your Keyboard

Every time you press a key on your keyboard, something invisible happens. The key sends a code—called ASCII—to your computer, which reads it and displays a letter, number, or symbol on the screen.

ASCII stands for “American Standard Code for Information Interchange.” It’s how computers translate your typing into digital information. For example, when you press the letter A, the computer sees “65.” Pressing space? That’s “32.” The enter key? That’s “13.”

ASCII was invented in the 1960s when computers were new and needed a shared “language” to understand each other.

Today, we’ve added more advanced systems (like Unicode), but ASCII is still at the core of digital writing. It’s proof that even something as simple as a keyboard hides a clever code behind the scenes.

Questions:

1. What is ASCII, and what does it do?
2. Why was it created in the first place?
3. How does it work when you press a key on the keyboard?
4. What systems have been developed since then?
5. What lesson does ASCII teach us about technology?

Reading 2: The Lemonade Law

Tessa and her brother ran a small lemonade stand every Saturday. They sold drinks, cookies, and even had a joke-of-the-day sign.

One morning, a police officer walked up. “Do you have a permit to sell?”

They stared. “A what?”

He smiled. “Don’t worry. I’m just teasing. But technically, some cities do require one—even for kids.”

That afternoon, Tessa looked it up. She learned that in some places, kids’ lemonade stands have been shut down due to food safety rules or business licenses. That gave her an idea.

She wrote a letter to her city council asking them to support “kid business days” where permits weren’t needed. Two weeks later, they responded—they loved the idea.

Now, her town hosts a “Junior Market Saturday” once a month, with booths just for kids.

Tessa still sells lemonade—but now, she’s stirred up more than just sugar.

Questions:

1. What surprising thing did the police officer say to Tessa and her brother?
2. What did they learn about local rules?
3. What action did Tessa take after researching the law?
4. How did the city respond to her suggestion?
5. What does this story show about using your voice?

Grade 6 – Week 36

Reading 1: How Video Games Train the Brain

You've probably heard adults say video games are just for fun—but some games might be training your brain, too.

Research shows that certain video games can improve memory, focus, and decision-making. Strategy games require planning ahead. Puzzle games improve problem-solving. Even fast-paced games can sharpen reaction time and attention.

Doctors have even started using specially designed video games to help treat ADHD in kids. These games challenge the brain in short bursts, helping build focus and follow-through.

Of course, not all games are helpful—and too much screen time isn't good. But when used with balance, games can do more than entertain. They can teach, train, and even heal.

So next time you game, just remember: your brain might be leveling up too.

Questions:

- 1.** What benefits can video games have on the brain?
- 2.** How are some games used in medical treatments?
- 3.** What types of games help with different skills?
- 4.** What are the limits of video game benefits?
- 5.** How can we make video games a healthy part of learning?

Reading 2: The Homeschool Time Capsule

At the end of the year, Theo's homeschool group decided to make a time capsule. Each family added one thing that represented their school year.

Theo included a photo of his volcano science project. His sister added a journal page she wrote during a camping trip. Other families added poems, seeds from the garden, even a chocolate bar wrapper from their "World Snacks" geography unit.

They placed everything in a metal tin, sealed it tight, and buried it under the old oak tree behind their co-op building.

"We'll dig it up in five years," someone said.

Theo looked around. It felt like freezing a memory, so future-you could say hello to past-you.

Questions:

1. What was the purpose of the homeschool time capsule?
2. What kinds of items were included?
3. Why did Theo think the project was meaningful?
4. When will they revisit the capsule?
5. What does this story say about remembering and reflection?