

Grade 7 – Week 1

Reading 1: The City That Banned Cars

Imagine a city where no one owns a car. In Vauban, Germany, that's reality. This small district was built with the goal of reducing pollution, noise, and traffic accidents. Instead of wide roads and parking lots, Vauban has bike lanes, walking paths, and green spaces.

People who live there can still own a car—but it must be parked in a garage on the outskirts of the neighborhood, and they must pay a high fee. Most residents choose to walk, bike, or use public transportation. As a result, Vauban's air is cleaner, streets are quieter, and kids can safely play outside without the danger of speeding vehicles.

Urban planners around the world are watching Vauban closely. Could cities be designed more for people than for cars? Vauban may be small, but it offers a big idea about how communities can change the way they live—and breathe.

Questions:

- 1.** What makes the city of Vauban unique?
- 2.** How do people in Vauban typically get around?
- 3.** What benefits has this car-free design created?
- 4.** Why are other urban planners interested in Vauban?
- 5.** How might this lifestyle differ from where you live?

Reading 2: The Chore Bet

Maya and her twin brother Aaron argued constantly over chores. Neither wanted to do the dishes, fold the laundry, or take out the trash. Their mom finally said, “Enough. Let’s try something new.”

She handed them a calendar and a list: 15 household tasks. “Here’s the deal,” she said. “Whoever does more chores this month gets to choose our weekend trip. No nagging from me. It’s all up to you.”

At first, they both did nothing, thinking the other would cave. But in week two, Maya saw Aaron quietly sweeping the porch. She raced to unload the dishwasher. Soon, it was a full-on competition—clean counters, folded towels, even labeled pantry bins.

In the end, they tied.

“You both win,” their mom smiled. “We’re going camping *and* going to the museum.”

Maya and Aaron groaned. “Guess we’ll have to split the chores next month too.”

Questions:

1. What challenge did Maya and Aaron’s mom create?
2. How did the twins first respond to the competition?
3. What changed their attitude during the second week?
4. What was the result of the challenge?
5. What lesson did they learn about responsibility?

Grade 7 – Week 2

Reading 1: The Science of Taste

Why do some people love spicy food while others can't handle a single jalapeño?

Taste is more than just what your tongue senses—it involves your nose, brain, and even your emotions. Everyone has about 10,000 taste buds, but the number of receptors and how they send signals to the brain can vary from person to person.

Spicy food isn't even technically a "taste"—it's a pain response. The compound capsaicin tricks your brain into thinking your mouth is burning. The more you eat spicy foods, the more your body gets used to it.

Genetics also play a role. Some people are supertasters, meaning they have more sensitive taste buds. Others may have grown up eating certain flavors, so their brains associate them with comfort and tradition.

So, the next time someone says "you just have to try this," remember—what tastes amazing to them might taste totally different to you.

Questions:

- 1.** What factors influence how we taste food?
- 2.** Why is spiciness not considered a true "taste"?
- 3.** What are supertasters?
- 4.** How does your environment affect your food preferences?
- 5.** Why do people experience taste so differently?

Reading 2: The Screaming Cupcake

Talia was known in her homeschool group for being creative—and a little weird. So no one was surprised when she entered the annual bake-off with a tray labeled: *Screaming Cupcakes*.

They weren't haunted. They were filled with Pop Rocks.

As people took bites, the tiny candies started fizzing and popping in their mouths, causing everyone to laugh, yelp, or make wide-eyed faces. It was the most talked-about dessert of the day.

Talia didn't win "Best Tasting," but she did win "Most Memorable" and "Crowd Favorite." More importantly, she reminded everyone that food could be fun—and surprising.

Later, a friend asked her, "How do you come up with these ideas?"

Talia shrugged. "I just think, what would make someone remember this forever?"

Questions:

1. What made Talia's cupcakes different?
2. How did people react to her entry?
3. What awards did she win?
4. What attitude did Talia show about being creative?
5. What can we learn about originality from her story?

Grade 7 – Week 3

Reading 1: The Library Beneath the River

In Colombia, there's a man named Luis Soriano who delivers books by donkey.

He calls it the Biblioburro—literally, “the donkey library.” Soriano noticed that children in rural villages had little access to books or education. So he loaded books onto two donkeys—named Alfa and Beto—and began walking for hours each weekend to bring stories to kids.

Sometimes, the path is muddy. Sometimes, it rains. But when he arrives, the children run to meet him, eager for a new adventure through reading.

His library began with 70 books and two donkeys. Now, years later, he has over 4,000 books and has inspired similar mobile libraries in other countries. For Soriano, the goal is simple: bring knowledge to places where it's hardest to reach.

Even without roads or Wi-Fi, one person—and two donkeys—can change the future.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the Biblioburro, and how does it work?
- 2.** Why did Luis Soriano start this project?
- 3.** What challenges does he face along the way?
- 4.** How has the Biblioburro grown over time?
- 5.** What message does Soriano's story send about access to education?

Reading 2: The Sibling Sabotage

Micah and Zoe had one rule when building LEGO structures: no sabotage.

So naturally, when Zoe's mini replica of the Eiffel Tower mysteriously collapsed overnight, she had suspicions.

"It just... fell?" Micah shrugged, looking overly innocent.

"Gravity isn't *that* dramatic," she muttered.

Zoe decided to set a trap. That night, she left her newest design—an airport control tower—on her desk. Then she placed a small sticker under one of the bricks. If someone touched it, the sticker would slide slightly.

The next morning, the tower was intact, but the sticker had moved.

Busted.

She didn't yell. She didn't tattle. She rebuilt the Eiffel Tower twice as tall and added a note: *Touch this and you're on dish duty for a week.*

Micah never touched her builds again.

Questions:

1. What was the agreement between Micah and Zoe?
2. What made Zoe suspect sabotage?
3. How did she try to prove it?
4. What strategy did she use instead of fighting?
5. What does this story teach about setting boundaries?

Grade 7 – Week 4

Reading 1: The Secret Language of Bees

Bees don't just buzz—they talk.

When honeybees find a good source of nectar, they return to the hive and perform a “waggle dance.” This dance is more than excitement—it's a coded message.

The direction of the waggle tells other bees where the flower patch is in relation to the sun. The duration of the dance communicates distance. And the more enthusiastic the dancer, the better the food source.

Scientists have studied this “bee language” for decades. It shows that even tiny insects use complex communication to survive and thrive.

Bees also use scent and vibrations to share information. Some researchers believe a hive functions almost like a single brain—thousands of individuals working as one.

Next time you see a bee, remember: there's more going on than meets the eye. You might be watching a conversation in motion.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the “waggle dance,” and what does it communicate?
- 2.** How do bees use direction and duration to share information?
- 3.** What other forms of communication do bees use?
- 4.** How does a hive function like a single brain?
- 5.** What lesson can humans learn from bee behavior?

Reading 2: The Mystery of the Missing Sock

Every laundry day, Ella counted her socks. And every week, at least one went missing.

At first, she blamed the dryer. Then the dog. Then the universe.

But one Saturday, while moving the washer to sweep behind it, she heard a faint rustle. She reached down and pulled out six mismatched socks—plus a pen, a candy wrapper, and a toy dinosaur.

Mystery solved.

Ella laughed, then taped a sign above the laundry basket: *Socks don't walk. Check the floor.*

From that day on, the socks stopped disappearing—or at least, they were easier to find.

Sometimes, life's little mysteries have simple answers. You just have to look under the washer.

Questions:

1. What was Ella's recurring problem?
2. What theories did she have about the missing socks?
3. How did she finally solve the mystery?
4. What lesson did she learn from the experience?
5. Why is this story relatable to everyday life?

Grade 7 – Week 5

Reading 1: The History of Umbrellas

Umbrellas have been keeping people dry—and stylish—for thousands of years.

The first umbrellas weren't made for rain at all. In ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, and China, umbrellas were used for shade. They were symbols of royalty and protection from the sun. These early umbrellas were often made from feathers, palm leaves, or silk.

The waterproof umbrella didn't appear until much later. In the 1700s, Jonas Hanway popularized using umbrellas for rain in England. Before that, it was considered strange—and even a little unmanly—for men to carry one. Hanway didn't care. He was mocked, but he kept using it.

Eventually, people saw the value of staying dry. Umbrellas became common. Today, we have automatic, collapsible, windproof, and even transparent versions. But the basic design hasn't changed: a handle, a canopy, and a clever way to fold it up.

From royal shade to everyday rain gear, umbrellas prove that good ideas really do stand the test of time.

Questions:

1. What were umbrellas originally used for in ancient times?
2. How did early umbrellas differ from today's models?
3. Who helped make umbrellas popular for rainy weather?
4. What resistance did Jonas Hanway face?
5. How has the umbrella design remained consistent over time?

Reading 2: The Great Couch Escape

Noah's dog, Toby, had never been left alone during homeschool days. But one Saturday, the family left him inside while they went grocery shopping.

When they came back, the house looked fine—until they entered the living room.

The couch had been pushed a few inches across the floor. Cushions were on the ground. The blinds were bent. And Toby stood proudly in the middle, tail wagging.

They checked the cameras.

In the video, Toby climbed onto the couch, jumped at the window, slid down the cushions, got stuck, and then wiggled out in pure chaos. It looked like a scene from a comedy movie.

Instead of getting mad, Noah laughed until he cried. Then he hugged Toby and added a new rule to the whiteboard: *No unsupervised couch adventures.*

Questions:

1. What happened while the family was gone?
2. What clues showed something strange had occurred?
3. How did the family discover what really happened?
4. What was their reaction to Toby's "adventure"?
5. What does this story show about handling unexpected situations?

Grade 7 – Week 6

Reading 1: Volcanoes Under the Ice

When we think of volcanoes, we imagine fiery mountains spewing lava. But did you know there are volcanoes hidden beneath ice?

In Antarctica, dozens of volcanoes lie under the massive ice sheet. Some are active, though their eruptions are rare and hard to detect. The weight of the ice and extreme cold make them difficult to study. But they're important.

If these volcanoes erupt beneath the ice, they could speed up melting by creating heat and cracking the glaciers. Scientists are closely watching them because this could affect sea levels worldwide.

In Iceland, there's a similar situation. The 2010 eruption of Eyjafjallajökull (try saying that five times fast!) disrupted air travel across Europe—not because of lava, but because of ash clouds carried by winds.

Volcanoes are powerful, even when we can't see them.

Questions:

- 1.** Where are some hidden volcanoes located?
- 2.** Why are volcanoes under ice harder to study?
- 3.** What effects can these eruptions have on the environment?
- 4.** How did the 2010 Iceland eruption affect people?
- 5.** What does this teach us about nature's hidden forces?

Reading 2: The Folder Switch-Up

Sam and Ava were both homeschooled and shared a desk for their co-op classes. One Monday, Sam grabbed his blue folder, tossed it in his bag, and headed to art group.

But when he opened it, it wasn't his usual sketchpad. Instead, it was Ava's science notes—neatly labeled and full of diagrams. Sam froze. Ava was probably freaking out.

He texted her: *I have your folder. And now I know how photosynthesis works.*

She replied: *I have your zombie drawing. The tree is wearing sunglasses. We're even.*

That afternoon, they laughed and traded folders. But from that day on, they each added a sticky note with their initials inside the front cover.

Problem solved—with a little humor.

Questions:

1. What mistake did Sam make with the folders?
2. How did he and Ava handle the situation?
3. What was funny about what they found inside?
4. How did they prevent the mistake from happening again?
5. What can we learn about communication and solving small problems?

Grade 7 – Week 7

Reading 1: The Science of Hiccups

You've probably had hiccups before. They're annoying, sudden, and often happen at the worst times. But what are they, really?

Hiccups occur when your diaphragm—a muscle under your lungs—spasms. This causes a sudden intake of air, which makes your vocal cords snap shut. That's the "hic" sound.

They can be caused by eating too fast, laughing too hard, drinking fizzy drinks, or even excitement. Most hiccups go away quickly. But in rare cases, they can last for hours—or even days.

People have tried all kinds of cures: holding your breath, drinking water upside-down, being scared suddenly. Some work. Some don't. Scientists still don't agree on one perfect cure.

What's clear is this: hiccups are one of the weirdest, most unpredictable body quirks.

Questions:

- 1.** What causes a hiccup to happen?
- 2.** What are some common triggers?
- 3.** What cures have people tried for hiccups?
- 4.** Why is there no single guaranteed way to stop them?
- 5.** What makes hiccups an unusual bodily function?

Reading 2: The Blanket Fort Agreement

During a rainy homeschool afternoon, Ethan and Nora had one goal: build the world's greatest blanket fort.

It started with kitchen chairs and moved into couch cushions. They hung fairy lights, created snack stations, and made "passcodes" for entering.

Then came the disagreement—who got the bigger pillow section?

"I measured this part," Nora insisted.

"I laid down first," Ethan argued.

Their mom stepped in and made a suggestion: each child had to draw up a fort "treaty," like a real peace agreement. They agreed on shared corners, rotating snack duties, and a no-shoe rule.

With signatures in crayon, the Blanket Fort Agreement was sealed. The war ended, and movie night resumed.

Questions:

- 1.** What caused the disagreement between Ethan and Nora?
- 2.** How did their mom encourage them to resolve it?
- 3.** What rules did they include in their agreement?
- 4.** How did creating a "treaty" help them?
- 5.** What does this story teach about compromise?

Grade 7 – Week 8

Reading 1: The Oldest Living Thing on Earth

You might think the oldest living thing is a giant redwood tree—but it's not.

The oldest known living organism is a type of seagrass called *Posidonia oceanica*, found in the Mediterranean Sea. Scientists estimate it to be over 100,000 years old!

This plant grows very slowly and spreads across the sea floor like a giant mat. It provides food and shelter for marine animals and helps protect coastlines from erosion. Because it reproduces by cloning itself, new shoots are genetically identical to the original.

Sadly, pollution and rising ocean temperatures threaten this ancient ecosystem. Researchers are working to protect it—not just because it's old, but because it plays a vital role in the environment.

Sometimes, the most important things are hidden beneath the surface.

Questions:

1. What is *Posidonia oceanica*, and why is it important?
2. How old is it estimated to be?
3. What role does it play in the ocean ecosystem?
4. Why is this seagrass under threat?
5. What makes it unique compared to other living organisms?

Reading 2: The Misheard Lyrics Mix-Up

During their homeschool music unit, Lucy and her brother Leo had to choose a song to perform for their family. They picked a classic rock song and practiced all week.

The only problem? Lucy was singing the lyrics wrong.

She thought the line was “Hold me closer, Tony Danza.” It was not.

Their mom burst out laughing when she heard it and played the real version: “Hold me closer, tiny dancer.”

Lucy turned bright red—but then laughed too.

They rewrote the song with their own silly lyrics and made it a comedy act. It ended up being everyone’s favorite performance.

Questions:

- 1.** What mistake did Lucy make while practicing the song?
- 2.** How did her family react to the error?
- 3.** What did Lucy and Leo do after discovering the mistake?
- 4.** How did they turn the situation into something positive?
- 5.** What lesson can we learn about handling embarrassing moments?

Grade 7 – Week 9

Reading 1: The Invention of Velcro

In 1941, a Swiss engineer named George de Mestral went on a hunting trip with his dog. When they returned, he noticed both of them were covered in burrs—those tiny, spiky plant seeds that stick to clothes and fur.

Instead of being annoyed, de Mestral was curious. He examined a burr under a microscope and discovered it had hundreds of tiny hooks that latched onto loops in fabric. That gave him an idea: what if a fastener could work the same way?

It took him over ten years of experimenting, but eventually, he created Velcro—a combination of “velvet” and “crochet.” It became popular in the 1960s, especially with NASA astronauts who used it in zero gravity to keep items from floating away.

Today, Velcro is used in everything from shoes to medical equipment to outerwear. And it all started with a curious mind and a sticky burr.

Questions:

- 1.** What inspired George de Mestral to invent Velcro?
- 2.** How do burrs attach themselves to fabric?
- 3.** Why did it take so long for him to develop Velcro?
- 4.** How did NASA help popularize the invention?
- 5.** What lesson can we learn from this story about observation?

Reading 2: The Great Family Game Night Debate

It was Friday night, and the living room had been turned into a battlefield. Not literally—but emotionally.

The family couldn't agree on which board game to play. Mom wanted something fast and silly. Dad insisted on a strategy game. Jenna wanted trivia. And Max just wanted snacks.

After thirty minutes of arguing, Mom set a timer. "You each get five minutes to convince the group," she said. "Then we vote."

Jenna gave a dramatic pitch for trivia, using a poster she made in five minutes. Dad broke out a spreadsheet. Max just waved a bag of popcorn and said, "Let's play something fun."

They ended up playing all three games—in rounds—and declared Max the unofficial winner for his popcorn-based diplomacy.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the conflict during family game night?
- 2.** How did Mom try to resolve the disagreement?
- 3.** What strategies did each person use to persuade the group?
- 4.** How was the final decision made?
- 5.** What can we learn about compromise and communication?

Grade 7 – Week 10

Reading 1: What Is Bioluminescence?

Imagine swimming in the ocean and suddenly seeing glowing blue lights swirling around you. It might sound like magic—but it's science.

Bioluminescence is the ability of some living organisms to produce light. It's found in deep-sea creatures like anglerfish and jellyfish, but also in some mushrooms, fireflies, and plankton.

The light is created through a chemical reaction inside the organism. Unlike a lightbulb, bioluminescence doesn't produce heat—it's a "cold light." Different species use it for different reasons: to attract mates, confuse predators, or lure prey.

In places like Puerto Rico's bioluminescent bays, you can see the ocean glow when disturbed by movement. It's caused by millions of tiny plankton lighting up all at once.

Bioluminescence reminds us that the natural world still holds incredible wonders—many of which we're still discovering.

Questions:

1. What is bioluminescence, and how is it created?
2. Name some organisms that use this ability.
3. What are the purposes of bioluminescence in nature?
4. What makes bioluminescent light different from regular light?
5. Why is this phenomenon considered so special?

Reading 2: The Cookie Business

Leah loved baking cookies. Her mom let her experiment on weekends—chocolate chip, oatmeal, peanut butter, even lavender shortbread.

One day, her neighbor offered to pay for a dozen cookies for an event. Leah said yes—and suddenly, her hobby turned into a mini business.

She learned quickly: pricing ingredients, managing orders, dealing with feedback, and even budgeting for supplies. Some cookies flopped. One batch turned green because she confused baking soda with matcha.

But she kept going. After a few months, she designed a logo and handed out order forms to local friends and family.

The best part? She didn't stop baking for fun—she just added a sprinkle of entrepreneurship.

Questions:

- 1.** How did Leah's baking hobby turn into a business?
- 2.** What skills did she develop through her cookie sales?
- 3.** What challenges did she face along the way?
- 4.** How did she balance fun with responsibility?
- 5.** What does Leah's experience teach about learning through doing?

Grade 7 – Week 11

Reading 1: How Roller Coasters Use Physics

Roller coasters might feel like pure chaos—but they're carefully designed masterpieces of science.

The moment the coaster climbs that first hill, it's gaining potential energy. Once it drops, gravity takes over, converting that potential into kinetic energy—motion. Loops, turns, and drops are engineered to use this energy efficiently.

Centripetal force keeps you from flying out of your seat during loops. Braking systems use magnets or friction to slow the ride without making it feel jerky.

Designers also study human psychology. The click-click-click on the way up builds suspense. Sudden drops and sharp turns create thrills without danger.

So the next time you're flying through the air at 60 mph, remember: it's not magic. It's physics in action.

Questions:

- 1.** What types of energy are used in a roller coaster?
- 2.** How does gravity affect the ride?
- 3.** What role does centripetal force play?
- 4.** How do brakes work on roller coasters?
- 5.** Why is psychology important in ride design?

Reading 2: The Notebook That Traveled the World

A homeschool co-op decided to try something new: a shared notebook. Each student would write a page, then mail it to the next person—across cities, states, and even countries.

Liam wrote a poem. Ella added a sketch. Someone from Australia included a page about kangaroos. The notebook traveled in a padded envelope with stickers and stamps from every stop.

After a year, it returned to the original group—full of drawings, stories, jokes, and questions for future readers. They scanned each page and made copies for every family.

It wasn't just a notebook—it was a snapshot of connection.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the purpose of the traveling notebook?
- 2.** What kinds of content did students contribute?
- 3.** How did the project encourage connection?
- 4.** What did the final result look like?
- 5.** What does this story show about creativity and community?

Grade 7 – Week 12

Reading 1: The Secret Life of Dust

You might think dust is just dirt—but it's much more than that.

Dust can come from soil, pollen, ocean salt, or even space. Every day, about 60 tons of space dust lands on Earth. It's made up of tiny particles from comets and asteroids, drifting down through the atmosphere.

Dust plays a role in weather, too. It helps form clouds by giving water droplets something to stick to. In deserts, dust can be carried thousands of miles by wind, fertilizing rainforests on other continents.

Unfortunately, too much dust can cause breathing problems and reduce air quality. Scientists use satellites to track dust storms and predict their effects on the environment.

So next time you wipe down a shelf, remember—you're touching the story of the Earth, the sky, and even space.

Questions:

- 1.** What are some sources of dust on Earth?
- 2.** How does space dust reach our planet?
- 3.** What role does dust play in cloud formation?
- 4.** What are the benefits and dangers of dust?
- 5.** How do scientists study dust patterns?

Reading 2: The Mismatched Slippers

It was the morning of homeschool group picture day, and Caleb had everything laid out—clean shirt, combed hair, and even ironed pants.

But halfway through the morning, someone looked down and burst out laughing.

“Caleb... are those *two different slippers?*”

He glanced at his feet. One blue, one green. He’d left his real shoes by the door and slipped on the wrong pair while grabbing his science folder.

For a second, he wanted to disappear.

But instead, he took a bow. “I call it fashion-forward.”

The group laughed with him. Someone else admitted to mismatched socks. And just like that, the awkward moment became a shared memory.

Questions:

1. What mistake did Caleb make before picture day?
2. How did others react?
3. What was Caleb’s response to the situation?
4. How did that change the mood?
5. What can we learn about confidence from this story?

Grade 7 – Week 13

Reading 1: The Plastic Problem

Plastic is everywhere—bottles, bags, containers, and packaging. It's lightweight, cheap to produce, and incredibly useful. But it also takes hundreds of years to break down.

Each year, about 8 million tons of plastic end up in the ocean. It harms marine life, clogs waterways, and even makes its way into the food chain through tiny microplastics.

Recycling helps, but only a small percentage of plastic is actually recycled. Some scientists are working on biodegradable plastics made from plants. Others are developing enzymes that break plastic down faster.

The bigger solution might come from how we live—using less, reusing more, and making thoughtful choices as consumers.

What we throw away doesn't disappear. It stays. And it matters.

Questions:

- 1.** Why is plastic considered both useful and harmful?
- 2.** What happens to most of the plastic we throw away?
- 3.** How does plastic affect the environment and animals?
- 4.** What are some current solutions being explored?
- 5.** What role do individuals play in solving the problem?

Reading 2: The Stuck Zipper

Sierra had exactly twenty minutes to get ready before the family left for church. She picked her favorite dress, zipped it halfway, and—stuck.

She tugged gently. Nothing.

She tried again, harder. Still stuck.

After ten minutes of panic and twisted arms, she gave up. “Mom!” she shouted down the hall. “I’m trapped!”

Her mom arrived with a safety pin, a paperclip, and an expression of calm experience. Together, they freed the zipper with patience and humor.

Sierra made it to church on time—with a cardigan.

The next week, she chose a different dress. “Not today, zipper,” she muttered.

Questions:

- 1.** What problem did Sierra face while getting ready?
- 2.** How did she try to solve it at first?
- 3.** Who helped her, and what did they use?
- 4.** How did Sierra respond to the experience afterward?
- 5.** What does this story show about small daily challenges?

Grade 7 – Week 14

Reading 1: The Truth About Goldfish Memory

You've probably heard the myth: goldfish only have a three-second memory. But science says otherwise.

Goldfish can actually remember things for months. In experiments, they've been trained to swim through mazes, recognize different shapes, and associate sounds with feeding times.

Researchers even tested if goldfish could tell the difference between music styles. Surprisingly, some fish could choose between classical and rock when rewarded with food.

So where did the "three-second" idea come from? No one knows for sure, but it stuck.

Unfortunately, this myth often leads people to treat goldfish as simple pets with little need for stimulation or care.

In truth, goldfish are smarter than they seem—and they deserve better reputations.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the common myth about goldfish memory?
- 2.** What evidence proves that goldfish can remember for months?
- 3.** What surprising abilities do goldfish have?
- 4.** How does this myth affect how people treat goldfish?
- 5.** Why is it important to challenge incorrect assumptions?

Reading 2: The Battle of the Leftovers

Dylan opened the fridge and sighed. Leftover soup. Again.

It had been three days, and the soup was still there. No one wanted it. But Mom had declared a “no food waste” week, and that meant every last bite had to be eaten before making anything new.

Dylan made a deal with his siblings: whoever finished the soup could pick the next meal.

He added crackers. Still boring. Then cheese. Better. Then hot sauce. Too much.

In the end, he finished the bowl, fanned his mouth dramatically, and wrote “tacos” on the menu board.

Victory had never tasted so weird.

Questions:

- 1.** Why didn't anyone want to eat the soup?
- 2.** What rule had their mom put in place?
- 3.** What strategy did Dylan use to make the soup more appealing?
- 4.** How did he earn the right to choose the next meal?
- 5.** What does this story teach about creativity and teamwork?

Grade 7 – Week 15

Reading 1: The Power of Sleep

Teens are often told to get more sleep—but many don't realize how important it really is.

Sleep isn't just for rest. While you sleep, your brain sorts memories, repairs tissue, and regulates emotions. Lack of sleep can lead to difficulty focusing, mood swings, and even weakened immunity.

Experts recommend that middle schoolers get 8–10 hours of sleep each night. But screen time, stress, and busy schedules often get in the way.

Good sleep habits—like turning off devices early, keeping a consistent bedtime, and limiting caffeine—can help.

Sleep isn't wasted time. It's a critical part of growth, learning, and well-being.

Questions:

- 1.** What important things happen while we sleep?
- 2.** What problems can come from not getting enough rest?
- 3.** How much sleep is recommended for students?
- 4.** What habits can improve sleep quality?
- 5.** Why is sleep especially important for teens?

Reading 2: The Flashlight Fiasco

Isaac planned the perfect backyard camping night. He set up his tent, brought snacks, and packed his flashlight.

Everything went great—until 10 p.m., when the batteries died.

He tried using his phone, but the signal was bad and the flashlight app barely worked. After bumping into a lawn chair and stepping on a marshmallow, he gave up.

Just as he started packing up to go inside, his little sister came out holding a glowing lantern.

“You forgot the backup,” she said.

Isaac took it, smiled, and decided to stay out after all. “Marshmallows and lanterns—it’s a vibe.”

Questions:

1. What caused Isaac’s plan to go wrong?
2. How did he try to fix the problem?
3. What made him consider giving up?
4. Who helped him solve the problem?
5. What lesson does this story offer about preparation?

Grade 7 – Week 16

Reading 1: What’s So Special About Coral Reefs?

Coral reefs are sometimes called the “rainforests of the sea”—and for good reason.

Though they cover less than 1% of the ocean floor, coral reefs support about 25% of all marine life. They’re home to thousands of species and play a major role in protecting coastlines from waves and erosion.

Corals look like colorful rocks, but they’re actually tiny animals called polyps. They live in colonies and build hard skeletons over time.

Sadly, coral reefs are in danger. Pollution, warming oceans, and acidification are causing many reefs to bleach and die. Conservation groups are working to plant new coral and protect existing reefs.

The health of coral reefs is deeply connected to the health of our planet.

Questions:

- 1.** Why are coral reefs compared to rainforests?
- 2.** What role do they play in the ocean environment?
- 3.** What are coral polyps, and how do they build reefs?
- 4.** What threats do reefs face today?
- 5.** How are people working to save them?

Reading 2: The Mystery Box Challenge

In their homeschool group, three friends were given a “mystery box” filled with random items: string, buttons, paper clips, markers, and rubber bands.

Their task? Build something useful.

At first, they laughed. What could you possibly make with *this*?

But after a few brainstorming sessions and a lot of trial and error, they created a paperclip launcher that could shoot across the table and hit a sticky note target.

They called it the “Homework Reminder Blaster.”

They didn’t win the design contest, but they won “Most Inventive”—and discovered that creativity often starts when you’re handed a bunch of things you don’t know what to do with.

Questions:

1. What was the challenge given to the homeschool group?
2. How did the friends react at first?
3. What did they end up building?
4. What award did they win?
5. What lesson does this story teach about creativity?

Grade 7 – Week 17

Reading 1: The Rise of Podcasts

Podcasts have quickly become one of the most popular ways people consume information and entertainment. But what exactly are they?

A podcast is like a radio show, except you can listen to it anytime, on demand. Some are interviews, others tell stories, explain science, or even act out fictional dramas. With millions of episodes available online, there's something for almost every interest—history, animals, mystery, sports, and more.

What's made podcasts so successful is their flexibility. You can listen while doing chores, driving, or walking the dog. Some homeschool families use podcasts as part of their lessons to reinforce learning in a fun, accessible way.

Starting a podcast is easy too—many teens have created shows using just a phone and a free app. It's a modern way to share your voice with the world.

Questions:

- 1.** What is a podcast, and how is it different from traditional radio?
- 2.** What kinds of topics do podcasts cover?
- 3.** Why have podcasts become so popular?
- 4.** How are homeschool families using them?
- 5.** What opportunities do podcasts offer young creators?

Reading 2: The Great Pet Plant

Ruby desperately wanted a pet. But her parents weren't so sure. Dogs were too much work, cats made her dad sneeze, and the family bird had once flown into the ceiling fan (he was okay, thankfully).

"Start with something small," her mom said. "Like a plant."

Ruby wasn't thrilled, but she chose a small cactus and named it Spike. She read all about sunlight, soil, and watering schedules. She even made a "plant diary" to track its growth.

Over time, she grew attached to the spiky little thing. She decorated its pot, gave it weekly sunbaths, and talked to it like a pet.

One day, her mom noticed. "If you can care for a cactus this well, maybe we'll consider a pet."

Ruby smiled. Spike got a new bowtie, just in case.

Questions:

- 1.** Why didn't Ruby's parents want a pet right away?
- 2.** What alternative did they suggest?
- 3.** How did Ruby treat her cactus?
- 4.** What did she learn from caring for it?
- 5.** How did her responsibility pay off in the end?

Grade 7 – Week 18

Reading 1: The Science of Earthquakes

Earthquakes are one of nature's most powerful and unpredictable forces.

They occur when pieces of the Earth's crust, called tectonic plates, move and grind against each other. The energy builds up until it suddenly releases, shaking the ground. This can cause cracks, landslides, and tsunamis.

Most earthquakes happen along plate boundaries, like the Ring of Fire in the Pacific Ocean. Scientists use seismographs to measure earthquakes and determine their strength on the Richter scale. A 3.0 might feel like a passing truck; a 7.0 can destroy buildings.

Though we can't prevent earthquakes, engineers now design buildings that sway instead of collapse. Emergency kits, drills, and strong infrastructure save lives.

Earthquakes remind us that the ground beneath our feet is always moving—even if we can't feel it.

Questions:

- 1.** What causes an earthquake?
- 2.** Where do most earthquakes occur?
- 3.** How do scientists measure earthquake strength?
- 4.** What can be done to protect people and buildings?
- 5.** What does this teach us about Earth's surface?

Reading 2: The Banana Bread Crisis

It was supposed to be an easy afternoon of baking. Jordan and his younger brother Milo were making banana bread for their homeschool life skills class.

They followed the recipe... mostly. But when it came time to add baking powder, Milo grabbed the salt by mistake. Neither noticed.

The bread came out looking fine. But one bite revealed the truth: it was salty. Very salty.

Jordan spit his bite into the sink. "It tastes like sadness."

Instead of quitting, they tried again. This time, Jordan double-checked every ingredient, and Milo read the labels out loud. The second loaf? Delicious.

They wrote "check the salt" on the fridge as a reminder. Lesson learned—baking is science, and science needs precision.

Questions:

- 1.** What mistake happened during the first baking attempt?
- 2.** How did it affect the banana bread?
- 3.** What did the boys do to fix the problem?
- 4.** What steps did they take to avoid it happening again?
- 5.** What lesson does this story teach about following instructions?

Grade 7 – Week 19

Reading 1: What's Inside a Tornado?

Tornadoes are violent columns of air that spin from a thunderstorm to the ground. They can form quickly, move unpredictably, and cause serious destruction.

Inside a tornado, wind speeds can reach over 200 miles per hour. They pick up debris, flip cars, and tear apart buildings. Most tornadoes last only a few minutes, but their effects can be lasting.

Tornadoes form when warm, moist air meets cool, dry air. This creates instability, especially in the central U.S., known as "Tornado Alley." Meteorologists use radar, satellite data, and storm chasers to track and warn people of incoming storms.

The safest place during a tornado is a basement or interior room without windows. Practicing drills can make a big difference.

Though terrifying, tornadoes are a powerful reminder of the atmosphere's strength.

Questions:

- 1.** How do tornadoes form?
- 2.** What happens inside a tornado?
- 3.** Where are tornadoes most common?
- 4.** How do scientists track tornadoes?
- 5.** What safety precautions should people take?

Reading 2: The Mismatched Socks Club

It started as a joke. When Caleb forgot to match his socks before co-op day, he showed up wearing one blue and one orange.

Instead of being embarrassed, he owned it. “It’s intentional,” he told his friends. “It’s called sock independence.”

The next week, three more students wore mismatched socks. By the end of the month, almost everyone did. Someone made stickers. Another friend started a sock donation drive for kids in need.

It became their group’s unofficial tradition—different socks, same spirit. Caleb smiled every time he saw another wild pair. All from one little “mistake” he turned into something fun.

Questions:

- 1.** What started the mismatched socks trend?
- 2.** How did Caleb respond to his mistake?
- 3.** How did others join in?
- 4.** What bigger impact did this fun trend have?
- 5.** What does this story teach about confidence and creativity?

Grade 7 – Week 20

Reading 1: The Mystery of the Northern Lights

The Northern Lights, also known as aurora borealis, are glowing bands of color that appear in the night sky near Earth's poles. But what causes them?

The sun constantly sends out streams of energy called solar wind. When this wind hits Earth's magnetic field, particles are pulled toward the poles. As they collide with gases in our atmosphere, they create shimmering lights in greens, purples, and reds.

These lights are usually seen in places like Alaska, Norway, and Canada. They can move and shift across the sky like dancing waves.

Ancient people thought the lights were spirits, messages from gods, or signs of future events. Today, we understand the science—but the magic remains.

Questions:

- 1.** What causes the Northern Lights to form?
- 2.** Where are they most commonly seen?
- 3.** What do the lights look like in the sky?
- 4.** How did ancient people explain them?
- 5.** What is the modern scientific explanation?

Reading 2: The “No Phone Day” Challenge

Ava’s family decided to do something radical—24 hours with no phones, no screens, and no internet. Just people, books, puzzles, and nature.

At first, it was awful.

Ava stared at the wall. Her brother paced. Her dad made shadow puppets on the ceiling.

Then, slowly, things shifted. They played card games. They built a pillow fort. They took a walk and actually talked. Ava journaled. Her mom made hot cocoa.

By the end of the day, no one wanted to rush back to their screens. They even agreed to make “No Phone Day” a monthly tradition.

Turns out, disconnection can bring unexpected connection.

Questions:

- 1.** What challenge did Ava’s family take on?
- 2.** How did they feel at the beginning?
- 3.** What did they do instead of using screens?
- 4.** How did their attitudes change by the end of the day?
- 5.** What does this story suggest about screen-free time?

Grade 7 – Week 21

Reading 1: The Language of Whales

Whales aren't just giants of the ocean—they're also remarkable communicators.

Humpback whales “sing” long, complex songs that can travel for miles underwater. These songs change over time and are shared between whale groups, almost like a musical trend. Scientists believe these songs may play a role in mating or helping whales find each other across vast distances.

Sperm whales, on the other hand, use a series of clicking sounds called “codas.” Each pod has its own distinct set of codas, much like a regional dialect. These clicks can relay identity, location, and social connections.

Even orcas (killer whales) use unique calls to coordinate hunting or to stay in touch with family pods.

Studying whale language is difficult—there's no Rosetta Stone for whales—but researchers are using artificial intelligence to try decoding patterns. One day, we might understand more than just their sounds—we may uncover entire conversations happening beneath the sea.

Questions:

- 1.** What types of communication do whales use?
- 2.** How are whale songs like musical trends?
- 3.** What are codas, and which whales use them?
- 4.** Why is studying whale language challenging?
- 5.** What future possibilities do scientists hope for?

Reading 2: The Backyard Stage

For as long as Layla could remember, she had been putting on plays for her family in the backyard. What started as paper crowns and towel capes became full-on productions—complete with cardboard sets and hand-drawn tickets.

This year, she had a new plan: adapt a classic fairy tale but with her own twist. Her siblings would be cast members, her mom would be in charge of popcorn, and Dad would run the string lights.

They spent two weeks rehearsing. Costumes were made from old clothes. A plastic bin became a pirate ship. And the dog? He played a dragon.

On the big night, neighbors sat in lawn chairs, and the show went off with only two forgotten lines, one spilled juice box, and lots of laughter.

The final scene ended with a bow and a standing ovation. “We should tour next,” Layla whispered. Everyone clapped louder.

Questions:

1. What kind of performances did Layla organize?
2. How did her family contribute to the play?
3. What made this year’s performance unique?
4. How did the show go on the big night?
5. What does this story show about creativity and teamwork?

Grade 7 – Week 22

Reading 1: How Elevators Changed Cities

Before elevators, buildings were rarely more than six stories tall. Why? Because no one wanted to climb all those stairs.

In 1852, Elisha Otis invented a safety brake that made elevators safe to ride. Until then, ropes could snap and fall, but Otis's brake locked the elevator in place if anything failed. He demonstrated it at a New York fair by standing on a platform and having someone cut the rope. It stopped mid-fall—and so did the audience's breath.

Soon, elevators became standard in buildings. Suddenly, it was just as easy to live on the tenth floor as the second. Cities grew upward instead of outward, leading to the skyscrapers we know today.

Elevators didn't just lift people—they lifted the world into a new era of architecture.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the problem with early elevators?
- 2.** What did Elisha Otis invent, and why was it important?
- 3.** How did his demonstration change public opinion?
- 4.** What impact did elevators have on city buildings?
- 5.** Why is this invention considered a turning point?

Reading 2: The Mystery of the Broken Clock

Every day, Micah checked the antique wall clock in the homeschool room before starting his math. But one Monday morning, the clock was off by five hours.

He adjusted it. The next day, it was wrong again. And the day after that? Even worse.

"It's haunted," his younger brother whispered.

Micah rolled his eyes but started an investigation. He checked the battery. Fine. The hands? Not loose. He asked Mom. She hadn't touched it.

Finally, during a quiet writing time, he spotted the culprit: their cat, Biscuit, leaping onto the shelf and batting the clock with his paw.

Mystery solved.

Micah moved the clock to a higher spot and added a new note to the whiteboard: "Science: cause and effect... and cats."

Questions:

- 1.** What problem did Micah notice with the clock?
- 2.** What steps did he take to figure it out?
- 3.** Who or what was responsible for the issue?
- 4.** How did Micah solve the problem in the end?
- 5.** What lesson did this situation illustrate?

Grade 7 – Week 23

Reading 1: What If Earth Had Two Moons?

Imagine looking up at the sky and seeing not one, but two moons.

Some scientists have explored this idea as a thought experiment. Two moons would affect tides, animal behavior, and even sleep cycles. The moons might pull on the oceans in different directions, causing unusual tides and possibly stronger waves.

Nighttime would be brighter—maybe too bright. Some nocturnal animals might struggle to adapt. And stargazing? That could become trickier with two giant glowing objects overhead.

There's also the question of orbit. The moons could collide, cause gravitational chaos, or one might crash into Earth over time.

While Earth having two moons is unlikely, imagining it helps scientists think creatively about physics, space travel, and how small changes could have massive effects.

Questions:

- 1.** How could having two moons affect Earth's tides?
- 2.** What impact might extra moonlight have on animals?
- 3.** Why could two moons be dangerous?
- 4.** How does this kind of thinking help scientists?
- 5.** What makes this a useful scientific thought experiment?

Reading 2: The Lemonade Stand Expansion

Jackson and Emma started a lemonade stand with one goal: buy a new soccer ball. But after the first weekend, they'd made more money than expected—and had fun doing it.

So they got creative.

They added flavored lemonades, loyalty punch cards, and even offered dog treats for passing pets. Emma made posters with jokes, and Jackson built a sturdier stand using wood scraps.

People started visiting just to chat. One neighbor said it was the “highlight of her walk.”

By the end of summer, they had bought two soccer balls, donated to a local shelter, and saved the rest. More than a stand, it had become a tiny business—and a big lesson in effort, kindness, and lemon-flavored marketing.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the original goal of the lemonade stand?
- 2.** How did the kids expand and improve it?
- 3.** What new ideas made their stand popular?
- 4.** What did they do with the money they earned?
- 5.** What does this story show about entrepreneurship?

Grade 7 – Week 24

Reading 1: Why Do Leaves Change Color?

Every autumn, trees in many parts of the world put on a dazzling display—reds, oranges, yellows. But why does this happen?

During spring and summer, leaves are green because of chlorophyll, a chemical that helps plants absorb sunlight and make food. In fall, shorter days and cooler temperatures tell trees to slow down. Chlorophyll breaks down, revealing other pigments like carotenoids (yellow/orange) and anthocyanins (red/purple) that were always there—just hidden.

This change helps the tree prepare for winter. Shedding leaves prevents water loss and protects branches from breaking under snow.

So those stunning fall colors? They're science—and survival—at work.

Questions:

- 1.** What gives leaves their green color?
- 2.** Why do trees stop producing chlorophyll in fall?
- 3.** What pigments become visible when chlorophyll fades?
- 4.** How does shedding leaves help trees in winter?
- 5.** What does this process show about nature's design?

Reading 2: The Floating Book Disaster

Noah had one job: don't let the library book get wet.

So of course, it ended up floating in the bathtub.

It wasn't totally his fault. He brought the book into the bathroom just to "read a few pages" while the tub filled. Then the doorbell rang. Then the dog barked. By the time he got back, the book was bobbing next to a rubber duck.

Panicked, he dried it with towels, a fan, and even tried (unsuccessfully) using a hairdryer.

The next day, he told the librarian the truth. She nodded, handed him a replacement copy form, and said, "Happens more often than you'd think."

Lesson learned. Next time? Reading and water stay far apart.

Questions:

- 1.** What mistake did Noah make with the library book?
- 2.** How did the book end up in the water?
- 3.** What did he try to do to fix it?
- 4.** How did the librarian respond?
- 5.** What lesson does this story teach about responsibility?

Grade 7 – Week 25

Reading 1: The Accidental Archaeologist

In 1991, two hikers in the Alps stumbled upon what they thought was a lost backpacker. But it wasn't a backpacker at all—it was a 5,300-year-old mummy, later named Ötzi the Iceman.

Scientists believe Ötzi was traveling through the mountains when he died. Thanks to the freezing temperatures, his body, clothing, and even the contents of his stomach were preserved. Researchers learned he ate grains and meat, carried tools made of copper and stone, and wore layered clothing made from animal skins.

The discovery was a major breakthrough in understanding ancient European life. Even his shoes taught archaeologists how early humans handled snow and rough terrain.

Ötzi wasn't found by a professional dig team—just two hikers paying attention. Sometimes, science begins with a surprise in the snow.

Questions:

1. Who discovered Ötzi, and where?
2. What made Ötzi's body so well-preserved?
3. What kinds of items were found with him?
4. What did the discovery teach scientists?
5. What does this story show about unexpected scientific finds?

Reading 2: The Great Pencil Debate

At their homeschool table, Jackson and his sister Nora had one rule: if you borrow a pencil, return it.

But after weeks of “missing” pencils, tension rose. Jackson accused Nora of being a pencil thief. Nora said Jackson’s pencils were too boring to steal.

Their mom, hoping to keep the peace, bought a huge pack of bright, glittery pencils and labeled them “Community Property.”

It worked—for a while. Then one morning, a pencil showed up with googly eyes and a mustache drawn on it. Nora called it “Sir Writes-a-Lot.”

They ended up turning it into a creative writing game: every day, whoever had Sir Writes-a-Lot had to write a silly short story.

And just like that, pencil wars turned into storytelling fun.

Questions:

- 1.** What started the conflict between Jackson and Nora?
- 2.** How did their mom try to solve the issue?
- 3.** What happened to one of the pencils?
- 4.** How did the siblings turn the situation around?
- 5.** What lesson does this story teach about turning problems into opportunities?

Grade 7 – Week 26

Reading 1: The Science Behind Optical Illusions

Have you ever looked at an image and seen something that isn't really there? That's the magic—and science—of optical illusions.

Optical illusions happen when your brain interprets visual information in a way that doesn't match reality. For example, the “rotating snakes” illusion makes still images appear to move, while the “checker shadow” illusion tricks your brain into thinking two different shades are the same.

Your eyes take in light and shapes, but it's your brain that tries to make sense of them. Sometimes it guesses based on experience—and gets it wrong. That's what makes illusions so fascinating: they show how your brain works behind the scenes.

Illusions aren't just fun—they're used in psychology to study perception, memory, and even how we make decisions.

Questions:

1. What causes optical illusions to occur?
2. Why does the brain sometimes misinterpret visual information?
3. What are two examples of common optical illusions?
4. How are illusions used in science?
5. What can illusions teach us about the human brain?

Reading 2: The Camping Chair Catastrophe

During their homeschool group's fall camping trip, Mason insisted he could set up his own folding chair. "I've got this," he said, waving off help.

Five seconds later, he was on the ground.

Turns out, he forgot to lock the legs. The chair folded inward like a clam, leaving Mason with grass in his hoodie and laughter all around.

Rather than sulk, he stood up, took a bow, and said, "Thank you, thank you. That was my opening act."

For the rest of the weekend, he was known as "The Chair Whisperer"—and made sure everyone's chairs were properly secured.

Even in embarrassment, Mason found a way to laugh—and help others.

Questions:

- 1.** What mistake did Mason make?
- 2.** How did he react after falling?
- 3.** What nickname did he earn?
- 4.** How did he turn the moment into something positive?
- 5.** What does this story show about handling awkward situations?

Grade 7 – Week 27

Reading 1: How Bubble Wrap Was Invented

Believe it or not, bubble wrap was never meant to be packaging.

In 1957, two engineers, Alfred Fielding and Marc Chavannes, tried to invent a new type of wallpaper. They sealed two shower curtains together, trapping air inside to create a textured look. It didn't sell.

Next, they marketed it as greenhouse insulation. That didn't work either.

Eventually, they realized the plastic bubbles protected fragile items during shipping. The rest is history. Bubble wrap became one of the most widely used packaging materials in the world—and one of the most satisfying things to pop.

It's a perfect example of accidental innovation: a failed idea that turned into a success by solving a completely different problem.

Questions:

- 1.** What was bubble wrap originally designed for?
- 2.** Why did the first ideas for its use fail?
- 3.** How did the creators discover its true purpose?
- 4.** What made bubble wrap successful in the end?
- 5.** What does this invention show about adapting to failure?

Reading 2: The Indoor Snowball Fight

Florida didn't exactly get snow, but that didn't stop Ana from organizing the first "indoor snowball fight" for her homeschool group.

She made dozens of fake snowballs from rolled-up socks and foam. She taped off "battle zones" in the living room and added safety rules: no head shots, no tackling, and points for good hiding spots.

The result? Total chaos—and total fun.

Parents laughed from the kitchen. The cat hid under a blanket. And for once, nobody asked, "Can we have screen time?"

The best part? Clean-up only took ten minutes.

Ana took a bow and declared, "Next month: marshmallow dodgeball!"

Questions:

- 1.** How did Ana recreate a snowball fight indoors?
- 2.** What rules did she set to keep it safe?
- 3.** How did the group respond to the activity?
- 4.** Why was this activity a creative success?
- 5.** What does Ana's idea show about imaginative leadership?

Grade 7 – Week 28

Reading 1: How Bees Communicate

Bees may be tiny, but their communication system is one of the most complex in the insect world.

When a worker bee finds a good flower patch, it doesn't just return to the hive and buzz excitedly. It performs a "waggle dance." The direction of the dance shows the angle to fly from the hive, and the length of the dance shows how far the flowers are.

Bees also use scent to leave trails, alert danger, or mark flowers they've already visited. Inside the hive, their buzzing can even vibrate to control temperature or signal new roles to younger bees.

Bees may not use words, but their movements, sounds, and scents form a powerful language all their own.

Questions:

- 1.** What is the waggle dance, and what does it communicate?
- 2.** How do bees use scent in communication?
- 3.** What other ways do bees share information in the hive?
- 4.** Why is this system considered complex?
- 5.** What can humans learn from bee communication?

Reading 2: The Library Mystery Shelf

At the local library, Aiden discovered something strange. Every time he returned a book, a new one was waiting in the same spot—on a small, bottom shelf near the window.

The books weren't library property. They had stickers that said "Take Me" and short notes inside like, "This one made me cry—in a good way."

After three weeks and four books, Aiden finally left one of his own with a note: "Hope this makes you laugh. It worked on my little brother."

The next time he returned, his note was gone—but a new one had appeared.

He never found out who started it. But the secret shelf became his favorite part of the library.

Questions:

- 1.** What strange thing did Aiden notice at the library?
- 2.** How were the mystery books marked?
- 3.** What did Aiden eventually decide to do?
- 4.** How did the mystery continue without answers?
- 5.** What does this story reveal about quiet acts of kindness?

Grade 7 – Week 29

Reading 1: The Forgotten Forest Trail

Lena's homeschool group had a tradition of monthly hikes, and this month's destination was an old forest trail that hadn't been used in years. Overgrown with vines and covered in fallen leaves, the path was hidden behind a crumbling wooden sign.

Armed with water bottles and trail mix, Lena and her friends set out. As they walked, they noticed tiny signs of past hikers—painted rocks, initials carved into tree trunks, and even a rusty canteen. It felt like they were exploring history.

Halfway through, they reached a clearing with a log bench and a broken-down birdwatching tower. Lena climbed the rickety steps to get a better view. To her surprise, she spotted a deer grazing nearby. She motioned to her friends and they watched quietly, amazed.

Back at the trailhead, their group decided to clean up the path together over the next few months. It was more than a hike—it was a chance to bring something old back to life.

Questions:

1. Why was the forest trail special to Lena's group?
2. What signs of previous visitors did the hikers see?
3. What made the clearing special?
4. What did Lena and her friends decide to do at the end?
5. What lesson can be learned from exploring forgotten places?

Reading 2: The Sky Lantern Surprise

During a summer visit to their grandparents, brothers Eli and Jude were invited to a sky lantern festival in the nearby village. Their grandma handed them each a paper lantern and a marker. "Write a wish or message," she said.

Eli wrote, "Be brave this school year." Jude drew a doodle of their dog wearing sunglasses.

That night, they joined dozens of people at the open field. The lanterns filled the dark sky with gentle golden light, rising higher and higher. Some had quotes, others had drawings. One even had a paper airplane taped to it.

Watching the sky fill with hope and humor, Eli felt strangely calm. "It's like our thoughts are floating out to the stars," he whispered.

When the last lantern disappeared, their grandpa clapped and said, "Same time next year?"

They nodded, already dreaming of what they'd write next time.

Questions:

1. What did the boys write or draw on their lanterns?
2. What was the purpose of the lantern festival?
3. What emotions did the lanterns inspire?
4. How did Eli describe the experience?
5. What made this tradition meaningful for the family?

Grade 7 – Week 30

Reading 1: How Chocolate Is Made

Chocolate is more than just a sweet treat—it's a journey from bean to bar.

It starts with the cacao tree, which grows in tropical regions. Cacao pods are harvested by hand and split open to reveal the beans inside. These beans are fermented, dried, roasted, and then ground into a thick paste called chocolate liquor.

From there, sugar and milk may be added, depending on the type of chocolate. The mixture is then refined, conched (mixed for hours to smooth out the flavor), and tempered to give it that glossy shine.

The process can take weeks, but the result is something enjoyed around the world—from candy bars to baked goods and even spicy drinks.

Questions:

- 1.** Where do cacao trees grow?
- 2.** What steps are involved in preparing cacao beans?
- 3.** What is chocolate liquor?
- 4.** What is tempering, and why is it important?
- 5.** What makes chocolate so globally loved?

Reading 2: The Cardboard Castle

Mia and her brother Sam had one rule during rainy days: no screens until after lunch. So when thunder rumbled and the downpour began, they got to work.

Armed with cardboard boxes from the garage, scissors, and a roll of duct tape, they decided to build a castle in the living room. Sam designed turrets and windows, while Mia created flags from construction paper. Even their cat got a spot in the royal courtyard.

By the time their mom called them for sandwiches, the entire living room had been transformed. They ate inside the castle, telling stories about dragons and secret treasure.

The rain didn't let up—but no one noticed. Their castle was more than just cardboard. It was imagination, teamwork, and a perfect way to spend a gray day.

Questions:

- 1.** What was Mia and Sam's rainy-day rule?
- 2.** How did they build the cardboard castle?
- 3.** What role did creativity play in their day?
- 4.** How did their project bring the family together?
- 5.** What does this story show about turning boredom into fun?

Grade 7 – Week 31

Reading 1: The Deepest Part of the Ocean

The Mariana Trench is the deepest known part of Earth's oceans. Located in the western Pacific, it stretches nearly 36,000 feet below sea level—so deep that if Mount Everest were placed inside, it would still be underwater.

Despite the crushing pressure, near-freezing temperatures, and complete darkness, life exists down there. Scientists have discovered strange creatures—some glow in the dark, others have transparent bodies, and many are still unidentified.

Only a few people have ever reached the bottom in special submersibles. It's one of the most remote and mysterious places on the planet, still mostly unexplored.

The trench reminds us how much we still don't know about our own world.

Questions:

- 1.** Where is the Mariana Trench located?
- 2.** What makes it so difficult to explore?
- 3.** What kind of creatures live there?
- 4.** How have scientists reached the bottom?
- 5.** Why is this place still full of mystery?

Reading 2: The Mystery of the Vanishing Muffins

In a house full of homeschoolers, baked goods never lasted long. But when Mom's fresh blueberry muffins disappeared before breakfast, everyone swore they didn't take them.

Each child had an alibi. The dog looked suspicious, but didn't smell like blueberries. The baby didn't have teeth. Even Dad said he was still in bed.

Detective Micah grabbed his notepad and began inspecting crumbs, napkin trails, and a tiny blueberry smudge on the doorknob.

The culprit? Their neighbor's toddler, who had wandered in through the unlocked back door and helped himself.

Micah got a thank-you muffin for solving the case—and a lock was installed the next day.

Questions:

1. What went missing from the kitchen?
2. How did Micah investigate the mystery?
3. What clues led to the answer?
4. Who was the real muffin thief?
5. What did the family learn from the experience?

Grade 7 – Week 32

Reading 1: The World's Most Unusual Library

In Norway, there's a library called the Future Library—and it doesn't lend out a single book. Not yet, anyway.

The project began in 2014, when 1,000 trees were planted near Oslo. Each year, an author is invited to write a book, but the manuscript is sealed away. In the year 2114, the trees will be cut down and used to print the 100 books for the very first time.

The idea is to preserve literature for future generations, even if the authors never see their work published. It's a quiet, patient act of hope.

Imagine writing something meant to be read by someone 100 years from now. What would you say?

Questions:

- 1.** What makes the Future Library unique?
- 2.** Why are the books kept secret until 2114?
- 3.** What message does the project send about time and hope?
- 4.** How are the trees connected to the books?
- 5.** Would you want to write or read one of these books? Why?

Reading 2: The Pancake Challenge

It started with a joke: “Who can flip the highest pancake?” Before long, the entire homeschool co-op was gathered outside with griddles and spatulas.

Points were awarded for height, shape, landing accuracy, and “pancake personality.” One was shaped like a dinosaur. Another had chocolate chip eyes and a syrup smile.

Laughter echoed as batter flew, and even the dads got involved—one launched a pancake onto the roof.

In the end, the winner was Lucy’s lemon blueberry creation that landed perfectly back in the pan.

She said her secret ingredient was “joy and wrist power.”

Questions:

1. How did the pancake challenge begin?
2. What made the event fun for everyone?
3. What kinds of pancakes were created?
4. Who won, and what was her secret?
5. What does this story show about creativity and fun?

Grade 7 – Week 33

Reading 1: The Moon Rock in the Museum

During a homeschool field trip to a science museum, Aaliyah stood frozen in front of the moon rock exhibit. Behind the glass sat a rough gray stone, no bigger than a baseball, but older than anything she'd ever seen—over 3.7 billion years old.

The rock had been brought back during the Apollo 17 mission, the last time humans walked on the moon. It had traveled nearly 240,000 miles, been handled with gloves and care, and now sat in a temperature-controlled display case under dim lighting.

Aaliyah read every word on the plaque, her curiosity growing with each sentence. She imagined astronauts collecting the sample, the silence of space, and Earth shining in the distance.

Later, at home, she wrote in her journal: "I touched history today. Not with my hands, but with my imagination."

Questions:

1. What made the moon rock so fascinating to Aaliyah?
2. Where did the rock come from?
3. How was it preserved and displayed?
4. What thoughts did the rock inspire in her?
5. What does this story say about the power of imagination?

Reading 2: The Community Book Bench

In a small Florida neighborhood, someone placed a wooden bench under a shady tree with a sign that read, “Leave a book, take a book.” At first, only a few paperbacks appeared: mysteries, children’s books, an old cookbook with notes in the margins.

But within a month, the bench had become a favorite stop. Kids brought their homeschool readers. Parents swapped novels. One neighbor started leaving hand-drawn bookmarks inside each book. Another added a box of crayons and coloring pages.

Soon, it wasn’t just about books. People lingered. They talked. Someone brought lemonade on Saturdays.

The bench didn’t just hold stories—it created them.

Questions:

- 1.** What was the original purpose of the bench?
- 2.** How did the community contribute to it over time?
- 3.** What extra touches made it special?
- 4.** What effect did the bench have beyond reading?
- 5.** What can we learn from a simple idea like this one?

Grade 7 – Week 34

Reading 1: The Science of Sleep

Sleep is more than just rest—it's when your body repairs, your brain processes memories, and your immune system resets. For teens, getting enough sleep is especially important because their brains are still growing.

But studies show that many middle and high schoolers don't get the recommended 8 to 10 hours per night. Late-night screens, early school times, and busy schedules often get in the way.

Lack of sleep can affect focus, memory, and mood. It can even make it harder to fight off illness. That's why some schools are experimenting with later start times—and seeing improvements in student performance.

So if your brain feels foggy or your body feels tired, it might not be laziness. It might just be science asking for a nap.

Questions:

- 1.** Why is sleep important for growing teens?
- 2.** What are some reasons students don't get enough sleep?
- 3.** How can lack of sleep affect a student?
- 4.** What solutions have some schools tried?
- 5.** What message does this passage share about health?

Reading 2: The Recipe Rescue

Evan loved baking. His homeschool elective this semester was “kitchen chemistry,” and today’s challenge was making scones using only what they had at home.

He mixed flour, sugar, and baking powder... until he realized they had no butter. He substituted coconut oil. Then his sister walked in and said, “Wait—you used salt instead of sugar!”

He sighed but kept going, deciding to turn it into a savory herb scone instead. He chopped rosemary, added parmesan, and hoped for the best.

The result? A bit salty, very crumbly, but actually pretty good. His mom called it “a surprise success,” and Evan made sure to label the jars next time.

Questions:

1. What mistake did Evan make while baking?
2. How did he adjust the recipe to fix it?
3. What skills did he use in the kitchen?
4. How did the final product turn out?
5. What lesson can we learn about creativity and problem-solving?

Grade 7 – Week 35

Reading 1: The Whispering Cave

On a summer trip to Tennessee, Jordan’s family visited a cave known for its strange echo. According to local legend, if you whispered near the opening, the sound would travel through the rock and be heard deep inside.

Jordan was skeptical—until he tried it. “Hello,” he whispered. Seconds later, the faintest “Hello” floated back from the darkness.

The guide explained that the cave’s narrow tunnels and curved walls carried sound unusually well. Even in ancient times, people had used caves for communication and shelter.

As they explored farther, Jordan noticed carvings from the 1800s and tiny crystals growing on damp rocks. It felt like the cave was alive—ancient, listening, and full of secrets.

Questions:

1. What made the cave unique?
2. How did the echo effect work?
3. What did Jordan see inside the cave?
4. Why did it feel like the cave was “alive”?
5. How did this experience change Jordan’s view?

Reading 2: The Lost Sketchbook

Olivia carried her sketchbook everywhere. It was filled with drawings of birds, buildings, and sometimes just her thoughts turned into doodles.

One day at the library, she left it behind.

Panicked, she retraced her steps, checked the lost and found, and even asked the librarian. Nothing.

A week later, a stranger knocked on their door. “Are you Olivia?” he asked. He held up her sketchbook. “I found this on a bench and saw your name inside.”

She flipped through the pages—everything was still there, even the half-finished owl she’d been working on.

That night, she drew a thank-you card and a small cartoon of a superhero named “Captain Sketch.”

Questions:

1. Why was Olivia’s sketchbook important to her?
2. What happened when she lost it?
3. How did she get it back?
4. What does her response show about her character?
5. What message does this story share about honesty?

Grade 7 – Week 36

Reading 1: A Letter to the Future

As part of a homeschool writing project, Carter’s mom gave him an envelope and a prompt: “Write a letter to your future self.”

At first, Carter rolled his eyes. But once he started writing, the words came fast. He wrote about his love for science, his goal to visit all 50 states, and his hopes for the future—“Please don’t forget how excited you were to learn,” he scribbled.

He sealed the envelope, and his mom tucked it into a special box.

Years later, Carter opened the letter in college. The handwriting was uneven, the ideas bold. He smiled as he read his own words: “I hope you still believe you can do big things.”

Questions:

- 1.** What was Carter’s writing assignment?
- 2.** What did he include in the letter?
- 3.** How did he react years later?
- 4.** What does this activity show about personal growth?
- 5.** Would you write a letter to your future self? Why or why not?

Reading 2: The Great Banana Mystery

Every day for a week, one banana from the kitchen disappeared—without a trace. No peel, no note, nothing.

Mom thought it was the dog. Dad blamed “midnight snackers.” But Nora had a feeling.

She set up a trap: she placed a banana in a bowl next to a flour line on the floor.

The next morning, the banana was gone—but so were the tiny flour footprints leading straight to the chicken coop.

Turns out, their backyard chickens had learned how to push open the screen door and sneak into the kitchen.

Case closed—with a stronger door latch.

Questions:

1. What was the mystery in the house?
2. What clue did Nora use to solve it?
3. Who were the real banana thieves?
4. How did the family respond?
5. What does this story teach about problem-solving?