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Teaching
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More Miracles for Helen Keller

An unexpected hero

Imagine the most famous person you know. Tiger Woods. Britney Spears. Prince William. Now think of this: Not one of them is as famous as Helen Keller was in her day.

Back in the late 1800s, nobody believed that blind or deaf people could lead normal lives. Most were sent away from their homes. They lived in bleak schools that were more like prisons than places to learn and grow. Few people believed that a person who was both blind and deaf could ever learn to communicate. But Annie Sullivan believed she could teach 7-year-old Helen Keller language.

When Annie first met Helen in 1887, Helen was wild and angry. She spoke by grunting and screaming. Nobody, not even Helen's parents, believed Annie would succeed.

And when she did succeed, news of this miracle spread far.

Helen often said that she had spent her early childhood in a "dungeon of silence" and loneliness. Freed from this dungeon by Annie, Helen blossomed. By the age of 10, Helen was able to write and read Braille—an alphabet system based on raised dots that people can feel on a page. In addition to English, Helen also learned French and Greek. She even learned to talk clearly enough so that Annie could understand her.

People all over the country wanted to witness Helen's miracle themselves. Writer Mark Twain, inventor Alexander Graham Bell, and President Grover Cleveland were just a few of the people who met with young Helen. When she got older, she went to Radcliffe College, the most selective women's college in the country. Annie went to all of Helen's lectures with her, and translated them into sign language. Helen graduated with honors.

She became an author, writing 13 books and hundreds of articles. She and Annie traveled around the world. She learned to ride a horse and a bike. When she died, just before her 88th birthday, she had become one of America's great heroes.

"Life," Helen once said, "is either a daring adventure or nothing."



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read "More Miracles for Helen Keller." Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question. Use your answers to answer the question below.

1. What is this article mainly about?
 - A. how to read Braille
 - B. why Helen went deaf and blind
 - C. the life of Helen Keller
 - D. what happened to Annie Sullivan
2. How old was Helen when she met Annie?
 - E. 7
 - F. 5
 - G. 10
 - H. 88
3. How was Helen freed from her "dungeon of silence"?
 - I. Annie taught her to communicate.
 - J. Annie unlocked the door.
 - K. Annie arrived with a fire-breathing dragon.
4. Which of the following is an opinion?
 - L. Deaf people can't hear.
 - M. Helen wrote books and articles.
 - N. Blind people can't ride horses.
5. In the fourth paragraph, what does the word *blossomed* mean?
 - O. grew and improved
 - P. sprouted leaves
 - Q. became taller
6. Why did people want to meet Helen?
 - R. They wanted to learn sign language.
 - S. They wanted her to write their college essays.
 - T. They were impressed with her accomplishments.
7. What is Braille?
 - U. a system of writing and reading for blind people
 - V. a way of speaking with your hands
 - W. a piece of hair that has been woven
 - X. a French alphabet
8. Another good title for this article is
 - A. "Helen Learns to Read."
 - B. "Helen and Mark Twain."
 - C. "Helen Keller: An American Hero."
 - D. "Life Is a Daring Adventure."

Bonus: Match the number under each line with the questions you just answered. Write the letter of your answer to that question on the line. You will answer the question below.

Where did Helen live when she was older?

1 5 4 4 2 8 6 3 1 7 6

The Animal Thieves

Selling illegal pets is big business!

His name is Anson Wong, and he was one of the world's most dangerous thieves. He didn't rob banks or steal jewels. He stole animals from the wild—endangered and deadly animals. His specialty was the Komodo dragon, the world's largest land lizard. Wong earned millions of dollars selling his stolen animals to collectors around the world.

Wildlife experts celebrated when Wong was finally caught and put in jail. But animal smuggling remains a huge—and growing—problem around the world. "There are people in the United States and around the world who want to own exotic animals as pets," says Craig Hoover, an expert who works for the World Wildlife Fund. "As long as there are people willing to pay thousands of dollars for these animals, there will be people like Anson Wong willing to smuggle the animals out of the wild."

Dozens of different bird and reptile species are the victims of this illegal business. Endangered breeds of parrots, rare giant lizards and tortoises, and deadly snakes are especially popular with collectors.

Smugglers steal the animals or eggs from native habitats like jungles and rain forests. They then sneak them into countries where they can be sold as pets. Their smuggling methods are often cruel.

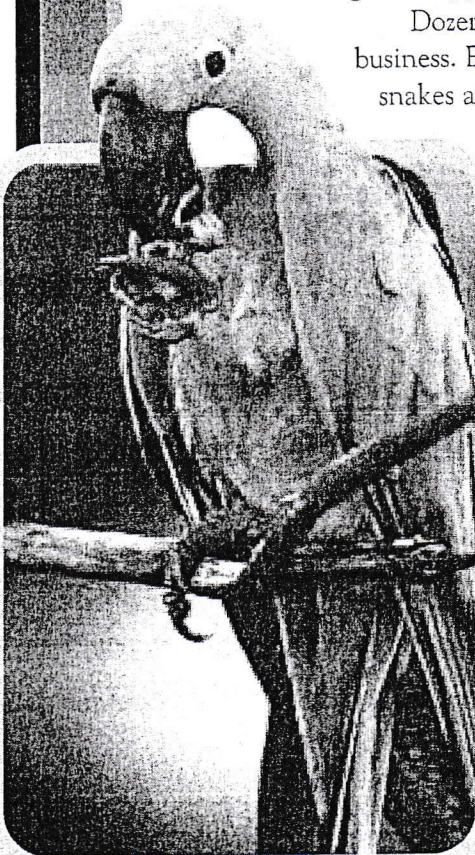
"They pack snakes and lizards into suitcases and drug birds before stuffing them into tires or tennis ball cans," says Hoover. "These people will do anything." Of course, many animals die during their journeys.

This business has hurt many animal populations. "Thieves will go into a rain forest and steal hundreds of eggs from a single area," says Hoover. For a species already threatened or endangered, this kind of theft can be devastating.

Animal smuggling endangers humans, as well. Often someone will buy an exotic animal without having any idea how to care for it. Every year, for example, dozens of people in the United States are bitten by deadly snakes that were illegally sold as pets. One Florida man died in 2001 from a cobra bite.

"This is an evil business," says Don Bruning, a bird specialist who works at the Wildlife Conservation Society in New York City. "It's wonderful that people are interested in unusual animals. But no one should be selling endangered or dangerous animals. And

no matter how much money a person has to spend, they should never be able to buy a priceless part of our natural world."



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read "The Animal Thieves." Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. What is a Komodo dragon?
 - A. a large land lizard
 - B. a fire-breathing monster
 - C. a large flying insect
 - D. an exotic red flower

2. What would probably happen if people stopped buying exotic animals?
 - E. Animal smuggling would stop.
 - F. Animal smuggling would become legal.
 - G. Animal smuggling would become a bigger problem.
 - H. Animal smuggling would not change.

3. You can tell that the author of this article thinks
 - I. parrots make good pets.
 - J. animal smuggling is an exciting job.
 - K. Craig Hoover is a nice man.
 - L. animal smuggling is bad.

4. From the cruel ways they transport animals, you can guess that animal smugglers
 - M. are very wealthy.
 - N. don't really care about the animals' comfort or happiness.
 - O. must not have pets.
 - P. are breaking the law.

5. Which of the following statements is an opinion?
 - Q. Anson Wong committed crimes.
 - R. Komodo dragons are endangered.
 - S. Animal thieves are evil people.
 - T. A Florida man was killed by a snake.

6. What is the main purpose of this article?
 - U. to tell you how to get exotic animals
 - V. to encourage you to keep pets
 - W. to inform you about animal smuggling
 - X. to warn you about poisonous snakes

Write It Out!

How does illegal animal smuggling hurt both people and animals?
Write a paragraph that includes three reasons. For each reason,
write supporting sentences or additional details.

The History of Gum

Fascinating facts about your favorite treat!

Got the urge to chew? Maybe you should go out to the garage and rip off a nice chunk of car tire. Not your idea of a tasty treat? A nice chunk of chewing gum is probably more like it. But there is a link between car tires and chewing gum, as a quick trip through the halls of gum history will show you.

The history of gum begins thousands of years ago, when prehistoric men and women chewed on lumps of tree *resin* (a sticky brownish substance that oozes from trees). The ancient Greeks chewed on resin, and so did Native Americans. Early settlers to New England loved to chew too. Gum made from spruce tree resin was a popular treat among early Americans.

The first big breakthrough in modern gum technology came in 1869, when a young New Yorker named Thomas Adams began experimenting with *chicle* (resin from sapodilla trees). He thought he could combine chicle with rubber and invent a new material for making tires.

His experiments were disastrous, but then Adams had another idea. If people couldn't drive on his chicle, maybe they could chew on it! Before long, Adams New York No. 1 chicle gum was all the rage.

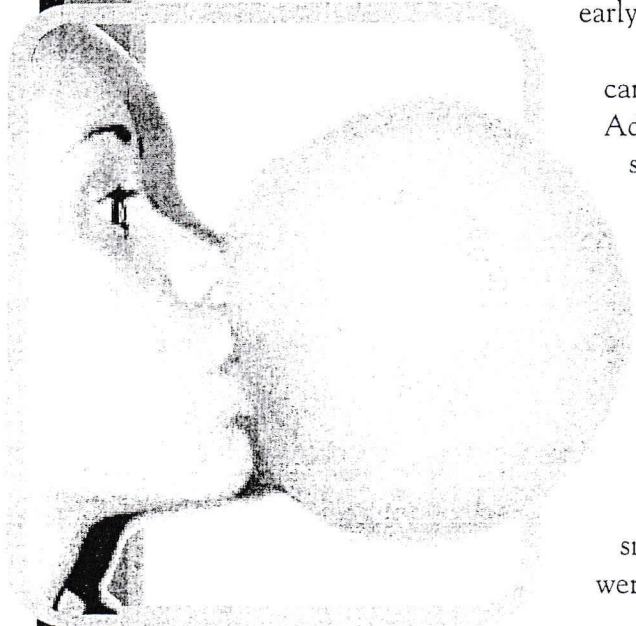
By the late 1800s, the gum business was booming. A new product called Dentyne came out, promising to help "dental hygiene."

Around 1900, an inventive gum maker coated small pieces of chicle gum with candy and Chiclets were born.

The first bubble gum, called Blibber-Blubber, was invented in 1906, but it never sold. It was so sticky that if it popped on your skin, it was impossible to remove!

It was in 1928 that Walter Diemer accidentally invented Double Bubble, the first successful bubble gum. Diemer was an accountant who liked to experiment with new gum recipes in his spare time. One day, without specifically trying to, he happened to hit upon the perfect bubble gum recipe. He added pink dye because pink was the only color left on the shelf, then carried a five-pound lump of the gum to a local grocery store. It sold out that afternoon.

So, what will "pop" up next in the ever-evolving history of gum? That's something for you to chew on!



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read "The History of Gum." Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. This article is mostly about
 - A. how gum is made.
 - B. why chewing gum is better than chewing tires.
 - C. the invention of Chiclets.
 - D. the history of gum.

2. Blibber-Blubber was unsuccessful because
 - E. it was too sticky.
 - F. it tasted bad.
 - G. people thought blowing bubbles was rude.
 - H. the pieces were too big.

3. Chicle is made from the resin of _____ trees.
 - I. spruce
 - J. sapodilla
 - K. maple
 - L. chiclet

4. Why did Thomas Adams decide to use his chicle to make gum instead of tires?
 - M. He thought he could make more money from gum than tires.
 - N. There was a shortage of rubber.
 - O. His efforts to invent tires were a failure.
 - P. A fortuneteller advised him to.

5. When did people first chew tree resin?
 - Q. thousands of years ago
 - R. no one knows
 - S. 1869
 - T. 1928

6. Which of the following happened last?
 - U. Thomas Adams invented chicle gum.
 - V. Bubble gum was invented.
 - W. Chiclets were invented.
 - X. Ancient Greeks chewed tree resin.

Write It Out!

Why do you think chewing gum is so popular?
Ask some friends and family members who chew gum why they love to chew it. Then write a paragraph that includes three reasons. For each reason, write supporting sentences or additional details.

Inventing a Game

How basketball was born

It was the cold winter of 1891, and the adult students at the Springfield YMCA training school in Massachusetts were growing restless. They hated the boring routine of jumping jacks and weight lifting. Not even the teachers thought these activities were fun, but they had run out of ideas. Finally, the school's director called a meeting. "We need a new indoor game," he told the gathering of exhausted instructors. Then he looked at a young teacher named James Naismith. "You," he said with a pointed finger. "Come up with something. You've got two weeks."

For the next 13 days, Naismith experimented with ideas for a brand new game. Nothing worked. Kicked balls shattered gym windows. Tackles left students' bodies bruised and bloody after they crashed to the hard wooden floor. But Naismith wouldn't give up. He had one last, desperate idea.

The next morning he rushed to the gym. He grabbed a soccer ball from the equipment room and, as his mystified students watched, hammered two peach baskets to the walls. He then scribbled 13 rules for playing his new game and tacked them on the gym's bulletin board: Players could not run with the ball. There would be no kicking or tackling. To score a point, a player must toss the ball into the basket.

The new game didn't have a name yet, but it soon would: basketball.

The first game, on December 21, didn't start smoothly. The players ran with the ball and knocked each other down. Nobody wanted to pass. But the thrill of making a basket soon had the men hooked. They loved the new game, and other classes loved to stop and watch. The game spread to other classes. Even the students at a nearby women's school started to play.

Basketball quickly became a sensation. Students took the game home to their local YMCAs. Colleges like Yale and the University of Iowa began playing regular games. By 1936, the sport became an Olympic event. Ten years later, professional basketball began, and the National Basketball Association soon followed. Sports in America—and the world—would never be the same.

The first game in 1891 didn't have backboards, three-point shots, dribbling, or 7-foot players who earn millions of dollars. But, amazingly, most of Naismith's original rules still hold. So the next time you see a basketball game on TV, remember that it all started one morning, more than a hundred years ago.



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read "Inventing a Game." Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. This article is mostly about
 - A. the original rules of basketball.
 - B. the history of basketball.
 - C. the invention of basketball.
 - D. James Naismith's life.
2. Why did James Naismith invent basketball?
 - E. To make money
 - F. To entertain students at the YMCA
 - G. He was tired of playing football.
 - H. He liked to invent games.
3. In the first sentence, *restless* means
 - I. sleepy.
 - J. sad.
 - K. bored.
 - L. athletic.
4. Which of the following is a fact?
 - M. Basketball is fun to watch.
 - N. Basketball began with 13 rules.
 - O. Basketball is a very hard game to play.
 - P. Baseball is better than basketball.
5. When did professional basketball begin?
 - Q. the 1890s
 - R. the 1930s
 - S. the 1940s
 - T. the 1960s
6. Why did the author write this story?
 - U. to persuade you to play basketball
 - V. to teach you how to play a sport
 - W. to make you laugh
 - X. to inform you about a part of basketball history

Write It Out!

Basketball is one of the most popular sports in the world today. Now you know how it started. What are some ways it has changed over the years? Answer this question by writing a paragraph. Include three ideas. For each idea, write at least two sentences that provide supporting details. Don't forget to write a concluding sentence!

Lunch or Junk?

Health experts get tough on school lunches

It's lunchtime at Hall Memorial School in Connecticut, and 10-year-old Haley is making her way through the food line. Many of her friends are thrilled with the day's lunch selections: pizza and French fries and hot dogs. But Haley feels discouraged. "I use four or five napkins just trying to get the grease off the pizza," she says. "Where are the healthy options?"

Health experts are asking the same question. They say foods high in fat, salt, and sugar should be banned from school lunch programs. This includes some items you might not suspect, like fruit punch, which is loaded with sugar, and macaroni and cheese, which is sky-high in fat and salt. "Children are already consuming too much junk food," says Jen Keller, a dietitian at the Physician's Committee for Responsible Medicine. "It's important to offer them only healthy items in school."

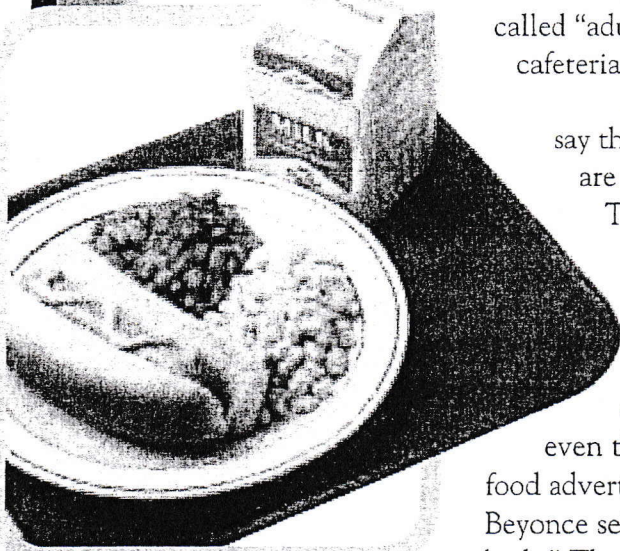
It's not that health experts want to deprive kids of foods they like best. They just want to help kids avoid many of the health problems that come with eating large quantities of unhealthful food. Today, 15 percent of children ages 6 to 11 are obese, or seriously overweight. That's up from just 6.5 percent in the late 1970s. Poor diet and obesity can cause diseases like type-2 diabetes, which can lead to blindness and kidney problems.

As of a few years ago, this disease was so rare in children that it was called "adult onset diabetes." "Many foods that are offered in cafeterias are linked to these problems," Keller says.

Most schools do offer some healthful foods, but experts say that doesn't solve the problem. "Given a choice, most kids are going to choose junk over something healthy," says Pat Thorton, a psychologist who studies obesity in children.

Thorton and other experts agree that schools and parents need to educate kids about making good food choices, both in and out of school. For example, few kids understand that many popular candies, chips, and sodas come in containers that actually contain two or even three servings. And kids need to become skeptical about food advertisements they see on TV and in magazines. "Just because Beyonce sells Pepsi doesn't mean it's a good product for your body," Thorton says.

Of course some kids already seem to know all of this. "The junk food is tempting," says 10-year-old Tim. "But my parents tell me that if I eat healthy now, I'll have strong bones when I get older."



Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Read "Lunch or Junk?" Then fill in the circle next to the best answer for each question.

1. This article is mostly about
 - A. how to cook a healthful meal.
 - B. greasy pizza.
 - C. food in school cafeterias.
 - D. how to cure diseases.
2. In the second to last paragraph, what does the word *skeptical* mean?
 - E. overweight
 - F. hungry
 - G. doubtful
 - H. healthy
3. Which of the following is a fact?
 - I. More children are obese today than in the late 1970s.
 - J. Hot dogs and fries taste good.
 - K. People should never eat junk food.
 - L. Soda vending machines should not be allowed in schools.
4. According to the article, who should be responsible for children's healthy diets?
 - M. children
 - N. parents
 - O. teachers
 - P. all of the above
5. From reading the article, you can tell that the percentage of overweight children a little over 20 years ago was
 - Q. 15 percent.
 - R. 30 percent.
 - S. 6.5 percent.
 - T. 10 percent.
6. Why did the author write this story?
 - U. to discuss his favorite meal
 - V. to educate you about eating healthy
 - W. to teach you how to exercise
 - X. to tell you about type-2 diabetes

Write It Out!

Do you think junk food should be eliminated from school lunches? Why or why not? Answer these questions by writing a paragraph. Include three ideas. For each idea, write at least two sentences that provide supporting details.

Bonus: Expand your paragraph into a five-paragraph essay.