



# acadience® reading k-6

## Student Materials

### Grade 6 | Benchmark 1

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# Hello Hong Kong

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► Warm air means a change in the weather, and summer means travel to many families. For the Chen family, this summer was going to be an exciting time of year. For the first time, they would take the underground train ride from their home in southern China and travel to Hong Kong.

Jackie was very excited about the visit. Jackie Chan, the movie star, was one of his heroes, and he liked to imagine that one day he would meet the famous star from Hong Kong. They would become good friends, smiling and laughing that their names were almost the same.

The family had spent much time learning about Hong Kong. Still, they were surprised at what they found when they got off the train and walked onto the city streets. Old Chinese ways blended with new Western culture, the result of British rule of the island for hundreds of years. The city was totally bilingual. Almost everyone spoke fluently in English and Chinese. Tall buses with two levels of seats whizzed through the busy streets, competing with trams and taxis for passengers. Modern skyscrapers filled the city, and millions of people bustled about their business and their lives. There were cars, but they certainly weren't necessary with all the public transportation readily available.

Rising high beyond the city skyline were steep, green mountains, and much of the island was preserved for parks. However, the family was only treated to the full beauty of Hong Kong Island when they took a ferry ride across Victoria Harbour. From the water, the family could see almost the entire island, including the mountains.

The Chens had a wonderful time exploring the city, shopping and visiting museums. They loved hiking up peaceful, green trails to look out over the island that was part of their homeland. Jackie knew he would return many times. There was so much to see and do that his imagination was set on fire. Maybe someday he would get to meet his hero. In Hong Kong, everything seemed possible.

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# Ocean Harvest

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► Many different organisms live in the salty water of the world's oceans, and one of the most useful and nutritious is seaweed. There are thousands of species of seaweed that grow in different shapes and colors. Seaweed grows in small bunches or in vast underwater forests and attaches itself to objects or to the ocean floor. Seaweed absorbs nutrients from the water, and, like other plants, it makes its own food. Also like other plants, it needs sunshine to produce its food, so it grows mainly in shallow water. A single plant can be very short or as long as three hundred feet.

In nature, seaweed provides a safe habitat and food for many different sea animals. It is an important part of the ocean's food chain, because seaweed is rich in the vitamins and minerals that are necessary for many creatures.

Seaweed is widely used in Asian countries, where it is plentiful because so much of Asia is surrounded by seas. It can be grown and harvested like land crops, a practice that is known as aquaculture. Seaweed aquaculture is a major industry in Japan and China. The harvest is used for many kinds of products, from fertilizer to food. Much of the seaweed is used for human food, and it is an important part of many people's diets even though you may not realize it. No seaweed is poisonous, and some is even considered a rare treat. The Japanese, in particular, use this "sea vegetable" in many of their daily meals. Seaweed is an ingredient in some kinds of yogurt that are sold not only in Asia but also in the United States.

Around the world, seaweed is also used in beauty aids such as soaps and skin lotions. In fact, you may be using seaweed without knowing it. Seaweed is often an ingredient in your toothpaste.

As you can see, there are numerous ways to use seaweed. If you have never tried it, you might consider ordering a seaweed dish at a restaurant someday.

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## River of Grass

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► Many people think of the Florida Everglades as a huge swamp, but it's actually a wide river dense with saw grass. Unlike ordinary grass, saw grass grows up to ten or fifteen feet tall and is sharp as a razor. The slow moving water of the Everglades flows for a hundred miles from a lake to the ocean.

In some places, the water is only a few inches deep; in other places there are deep pools. The mud in the river is a kind of quicksand that can swallow a person or stall a boat. Small islands called hammocks dot the river. Native Americans once made their homes on the hammocks.

Abundant birds such as egrets, great blue herons, and spoonbills live in this region. Wildlife you might see on a visit there include bobcats, raccoons, alligators, and even a rare type of panther. Don't forget to watch out for dangerous snakes such as water moccasins and rattlesnakes!

There are wet and dry seasons in the Everglades. Water levels drop during the dry season, from December to April, and much of the wildlife migrates to areas with deeper pools of water. With the beginning of the wet season, the wildlife once again scatters over a wide area.

Like many other natural areas on earth, the Everglades is threatened by civilization. Even though part of this region is a national park, pollutants from farms and cities have entered the water. The natural movement of the river has been interrupted by the dams that were built to control water flow. Encroaching towns disturb the land and animals.

Those who treasure the Everglades ecology know the importance of protecting its land, water, and animals. They are working to find solutions to the problems that threaten the region. We hope it's not too late to save the river of grass.

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