



acadience® reading 7–8

Oral Reading

Student Materials

Grade 8 | Benchmark 1

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Leaving Liberty

► I grew up near Liberty, Missouri, in the cabin Papa constructed before my birth. Because my friends and family all live in Liberty, too, planning to move elicited a flood of emotions, and tears came forth along with excitement over the prospect of a grand adventure. How could I be simultaneously enthusiastic about embarking on a new life and despondent about leaving my old life behind?

Papa had arranged for us to join a wagon train heading westward into unsettled territory. We would find no merchants to provide goods or services, meaning we had to pack into our wagon everything required for subsistence. After food, bedding, clothing, and other necessities, little room remained, even for people in the wagon, so we could not cling to unnecessary objects, no matter how dear.

Mama allotted each of us children a small wooden box and explained that we could take along only what could fit into it. Dismayed, I surveyed the treasures spread across my bed. Most of them seemed as much a part of me as the freckles on my nose. The raggedy old corncob doll had been a willing listener whenever I poured out my heart. The well-worn storybook was a magical carpet that carried me off to spectacular adventures in exotic locales. My framed charcoal drawing of our cabin, which I displayed proudly for everyone to see, was too large to fit into the box.

Fighting back tears, I attempted to focus positively on the few significant possessions I could fit into the box. First, I selected the dainty locket that Grandmother gave me on my 10th birthday. I opened it and looked at the pictures smiling out at me. Those images of Grandmother and Grandfather would be comforting when I was miles away from them. Then I picked up the tiny sewing kit that my best friend Priscilla had given me, and I placed it next to the locket. Enough room remained in the box for a short pencil and a few tightly folded leaflets of paper. Even if I could not speak with my friends and family in Liberty, I could correspond with an occasional letter.

When we were finally on our way, my thoughts turned toward the adventure ahead. I realized that everything comfortable and familiar was behind me, but I knew that each new dawn would break with the promise of exciting opportunities.

Reef Matters

► Oyster reefs are important to coastal waters. Not only do they produce oysters for eating, the reefs support many animals, clean the water, and stabilize shorelines and estuaries, places where fresh and salt water mix as rivers flow into the sea.

An oyster reef is an underwater structure made up of dead oyster shells that have fused together over time. In their earliest stage of development, tiny and soft oysters land on an oyster reef and become attached to its rigid surface. To complete their growth, they develop protective shells and then spawn to produce more oysters. As the cycle continues over many years and several generations, an oyster reef can grow massive and complex, with millions of miniature cave-like structures.

The oyster reef is useful to young oysters as well as many other life forms. The tiny caves serve as habitats, or homes, for smaller creatures such as clams, scallops, worms, and shrimp. The hard walls of the reef protect these animals from larger predators, or hunters that eat them. Because oyster reefs are home to so many types of sea animals, they also make an excellent hunting ground for smaller creatures. For example, many varieties of crabs find food in oyster reefs.

While oyster reefs serve as a habitat for many sea creatures, each oyster helps the entire estuary. Oysters are filter feeders, which means that they move water through their gills and filter food particles out of the water for nourishment. They also filter particles that make water unclean. A single oyster can filter up to 20 gallons of water a day! Just think of how much water gets cleaned by a reef made up of thousands of oysters.

Oyster reefs are often located in bays and estuaries, but they are also present along shorelines. Along these shores, oyster reefs act as a protective barrier, breaking up waves and protecting the shore from erosion. Because of overharvesting and natural disasters such as hurricanes, oyster reefs have become an endangered habitat. As a result, many people along coastlines around the world are working to enhance or reintroduce oyster reef systems for their many benefits.

The Rise of the Two-Party Political System

► The political party system in the United States traces its roots back to the early years of its government and differing beliefs about the role of government and its powers. Thomas Jefferson began the Democratic-Republican Party, while Alexander Hamilton and his supporters formed the Federalist Party.

The Federalists believed in a strong central government. The Democratic-Republicans feared that a strong central government would be like a monarchy run by a king and, instead, favored states' rights. The parties also split along regional, or geographic, lines. The Federalist Party was stronger in the North; the Democratic-Republican Party was strong in the South. A Federalist was elected as the second president, but Thomas Jefferson and his party won in the next election. Over the next few years, the Federalist Party faded away, leaving just one major party.

During this time, the nation was young but growing, and as new states joined the union and new voting laws were passed, a division in the Democratic-Republicans occurred. The split was again rooted in beliefs about the role of the federal government and again fell along regional lines. A group led by Andrew Jackson became the Democrats and held control mostly in the South and West. John Quincy Adams and his followers formed the short-lived National Republicans and held more support in the Northeast.

For the first half of the 19th century, the parties and power changed back and forth. Andrew Jackson beat John Quincy Adams for the presidency in 1828 and was elected again in 1832. Jackson's opponents, including Adams, were afraid that he was too king-like and formed a new party called the Whigs. The Whigs won in 1840, but the Democrats would soon return to office.

Power continued to shift back and forth until the issue of slavery caused splits in both parties. This set the stage for today's two-party system. The Whigs did not get the votes needed to gain power, and most members joined a new, anti-slavery Republican Party. Two factions, or separate groups, in the Democratic Party each ran a candidate for president in 1860. As a result, Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, was elected. Most scholars agree that the election of 1860 was the one that set the Republican and Democratic Parties as the two major parties in the United States. These are the parties we know today.
