



acadience® reading 7–8

Oral Reading

Student Materials

Grade 7 | Benchmark 2

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Light Show in the Night Sky

► It was Jessica's second night visiting her aunt's farm in northern Minnesota. After a full day of swimming in the local swimming hole and hiking around the farm, she was ready to fall asleep. Just after she turned off the light, however, she heard her aunt calling from the garden outside. "Jessica, come outside, quickly," her aunt called excitedly.

Curious, Jessica stuffed her feet into slippers and shuffled to the door to see her aunt gazing upward into the night sky. Jessica thought her aunt was looking at the thousands of nighttime stars. She had seen plenty of stars the night before; they were spectacular out here, far from the light pollution of the cities. Still, she wondered what was so special about them tonight. As she stepped outside, a flash of bright green streaked across the sky and a startled cry escaped her lips. This made her aunt chuckle and remark, "It's amazing, isn't it?"

Wide-eyed, Jessica stammered, "What on earth was that?"

Her aunt said it was the aurora borealis, also known as the Northern Lights. She explained that they occur when gas particles high up in the atmosphere collide with other particles. "I don't fully understand the process," she continued, "but I know they're unpredictable and absolutely beautiful. If we're lucky, the show tonight might get even better."

Sure enough, a few minutes later another streak of green appeared in the sky. It looked like the beam of a spotlight rising up out of the shadowed trees and stretching across the blackness. Sometimes the lights flared out into a swoosh of color, as if a giant person had swirled a paintbrush through it. Then, as suddenly as it had appeared, it vanished and then more lights became visible, with some daggers of blue stabbing the sky, others yellow ribbons twisting in a gentle breeze.

Jessica remarked that it was odd that it was so quiet. It seemed like such a display would be accompanied by thunderous booms, or crackles and pops, but the only sound was the chirping of crickets.

Jessica made a vow to look for the lights the following night, and every night during her stay. Although she didn't see them again on the trip, she would never forget her night of the strange, yet beautiful, aurora borealis.

The Zamboni

► When an ice skating rink has been battered and gouged, or roughly cut, by many different skaters, an ice resurfacing machine comes onto the ice and polishes the surface to a smooth, glassy shine. This process used to smooth the ice was invented by Frank Zamboni.

Frank Zamboni worked as a mechanic in California. He and his brothers specialized in both automobile repair and the repair of refrigerators for the dairy industry. One day they decided to branch out and build an ice skating rink. At that time, resurfacing a skating rink was a lengthy, manual process. Workers first shaved the top layer off the ice and then they scooped up the shavings. Afterwards, they sprayed the surface with water and cleaned it. Then they allowed the water to freeze, making the skating surface smooth again. The whole process took over an hour, and Zamboni was impatient to get skaters back on the ice more quickly. Using his background in both car repair and refrigeration, Frank invented a resurfacing machine called the Zamboni.

Zamboni's machine follows a four-step process to resurface the ice. First, a long blade, like a thick razor blade, scrapes less than an inch off the rough surface of the ice. An auger, or rotating screw, sits above the scraper, gathering and storing the shaved ice. The ice container is the largest portion of the Zamboni, holding about 2,600 pounds of the shaved ice. Next, the Zamboni shoots water onto the ice to get out dirt and debris that may have become embedded, or firmly enclosed, in the ice. The extra water and loose fragments of ice are squeegeed off and vacuumed up into the back end of the Zamboni. Finally, warm water is sprayed over the ice, evenly covering it and filling any remaining cuts. Then, cooling coils beneath the ice freeze the water quickly, making a smooth, slick surface that is ideal for skaters. Afterward, the Zamboni exits the rink and the ice container is emptied. The whole process of resurfacing the ice takes between 6 and 7 minutes. Both skaters and hockey fans, ready to be back on the ice, are pleased with the quick results of the Zamboni.

A “Great Soul”

► Mohandas Gandhi was born in 1869 in India, which was then under British rule. As a boy, Gandhi disliked sports, was an average student, and was small for his age. As a man, though, he would make history by exercising a great inner strength and by staying committed, or faithful, to his beliefs.

In his early 20s, Gandhi studied law in England, which was unusual for Indians at the time. The other students discriminated against him, and Gandhi spent long, quiet hours with books rather than friends. During these years he discovered the writings of an American named Henry David Thoreau. Thoreau promoted the idea of “civil disobedience,” the refusal to obey laws that go against a person’s conscience, or sense of right and wrong.

After law school, Gandhi went to work in South Africa, also under British rule. Many people from India lived in South Africa, but they were treated poorly and had few rights. Gandhi decided to push for change using a form of civil disobedience known as “ahimsa,” or non-violence. Rather than fight to achieve his goals, Gandhi stated them clearly and then became willing to go to jail or die rather than follow unfair laws. Thousands of Indians were moved by this idea and joined the cause. Gandhi was jailed twice, but at last he succeeded and important laws were changed.

Gandhi returned to India in 1914, where he led a simple life of prayer and poverty. His teachings and writings earned him the name Mahatma, or “great soul.” In India, as in South Africa, Gandhi used non-violence to work for equal rights. He also became a leader in the movement to break away from British rule. In 1930, he led thousands of people in a protest against British taxes on salt. The group marched almost 300 miles to the Arabian Sea, where they made their own salt from ocean water. Through peaceful actions like this one, Gandhi kept pressure on Great Britain for decades, and in 1947 his home country won its freedom.

Gandhi was killed the following year at the age of 79. His killer belonged to a group that wanted power in the new nation, and he did not like Gandhi’s message of power through peace. But even though Gandhi died by violent means, his message lives on in those who work peacefully for change around the world.
