



acadience® reading 7–8

Oral Reading

Student Materials

Grade 8 | Progress Monitoring 1

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Help from Nana

► Last Wednesday, with uncharacteristic confidence, I registered to sing in my school’s annual talent competition. While I am passionate about singing and consider myself above average in terms of talent, I am typically too shy to compete against others. Reflecting on my determination, despite my jitters, I decided that my newfound confidence must have come from the recent encouragement I received from my grandmother.

For 13 years, my family resided near my paternal grandmother, Nana, and we were extremely close. This past spring, my father’s employer transferred him across the country, but Nana remained in her home of 60 years. Nana had instilled in me an affinity for music by singing with me as we completed various chores. When Nana assured me that I had an angel’s voice, I sang louder and more confidently. Sometimes I glimpsed at Nana, her eyes closed, swaying gently back and forth as if my song was a rocking chair, lulling her to sleep.

Prior to moving, my father purchased a laptop with a video camera. Nana and I learned to use video chat and we have chatted by computer weekly or biweekly ever since. One afternoon I was feeling particularly unsettled and Nana requested that I sing for her. I thought her request sounded goofy and a bit irrational, but when Nana started singing with me, I realized how much music bonded us. Since that first video performance, we vowed to end our chats in song. Nana encouraged me to pursue my passion and audition for the lead in the school musical.

With that encouragement, I concluded that I should first attempt to compete in the talent competition. What better way to get the attention of the casting director than to perform exceptionally well before a crowd. That was last week, but now the competition was at hand, and my confidence wilted. Before I left home, I dialed Nana one last time and her beaming smile bolstered me. She reminded me that I had performed that piece for her over a dozen times and she encouraged me to sing to her during my performance. When I stepped on stage, I thought of myself standing in front of the computer camera singing to Nana, and I smiled. Even if I didn’t win, Nana had encouraged me enough that I knew I would have the confidence to give it my all.

Elephant Seals

► Elephant seals are remarkable marine mammals that migrate farther than any other mammal in the world, traveling up to 13,000 miles in one year. They are also the only mammal that migrates twice annually. Adult males can grow to over 14 feet long and weigh up to 4,500 pounds. They are not called elephant seals because of their massive bodies. Instead, they are so named because adult males have large noses that are pendulous, or droop and hang like an elephant's trunk.

Each December, northern elephant seals migrate from their offshore feeding grounds to their breeding beaches, or rookeries, along the coasts of California and Mexico. Soon after their arrival, female elephant seals give birth to pups that were conceived 11 months before. The pups nurse for 28 days and then the females mate with one or more of the dominant males. The adult seals leave the pups on the breeding beaches in March and head to the open ocean to forage for food.

The male elephant seals swim thousands of miles along the continental shelf, some as far as the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. They feed on fish, small sharks, and rays. The females generally swim into deeper waters where they feed primarily on squid. Extraordinary divers, elephant seals spend 90 percent of their lives under water. They plunge to depths of 1,000 to 5,000 feet and remain submerged for 15 minutes to 2 hours. When they emerge to breathe, they stay at the surface for only 4 or 5 minutes before submerging again.

After the adults depart, the pups remain on the beach for 8 to 10 weeks, fending for themselves and sharpening their feeding and swimming skills. These elephant seal pups also molt, or shed, their first coat of fur, which is replaced by a shiny silvery coat. By late April, the pups are ready to leave the rookery and migrate north. They travel and feed along the coast of Washington and British Columbia.

In late April, elephant seal females return to the rookeries to molt their thick skin and fur, while adult males return to molt later in the summer. In September, the youngest elephant seals return to land to rest. After molting, the seals return to their feeding grounds until December when the birthing, breeding, molting, and migration cycle begins again.

Age of Discovery

► The 1400s were times of great change and discovery in Europe. Nations such as France, England, and Spain had formed strong governments, and as these governments collected taxes, their wealth grew. Citizens became richer, and more people owned land and bought goods and services. Governments and individuals had money to spend and they began looking for new places to spend it.

Traders first looked to the Far East. Europeans were eager to buy the spices, silks, and jewels that came from Asia, but land routes were difficult and costly to navigate, or get across. Problems grew when these routes came under the control of groups hostile to Christianity, the primary religion in Europe.

Europeans needed new ways to get to Asian markets so they looked west, across the Atlantic Ocean. If the world was round, as many people believed, there must be a water route to Asia. This was the idea that sent Christopher Columbus on his voyage in 1492. However, he landed not in Asia, but on islands south of what is now Florida. He happened upon a “new” world by accident and that world was filled with gold and silver, plants and animals, and other natural resources.

More than 300 years of exploration and colonization, or establishing settlements, followed. Spain was the first to claim land in the Americas. Driven by a hunger for gold, Spanish soldiers conquered the civilizations that existed in present-day Mexico. To the north, the French focused on the fur trade and began settlements in modern-day Canada. Finally, settlers from England began to arrive on the eastern shores of what is now the United States. These settlers did not want gold or furs but a new life that included religious freedom and a piece of land to call their own.

What most Europeans ignored was that other people already called these lands home. During this process of exploration, discovery, and settlements, thousands of Native Americans died from new diseases or in battles with Europeans. Still other Native Americans were exploited, or taken advantage of, and forced to work.

History shows us that times of great change bring results both good and bad. The age of exploration expanded the knowledge about the world and the world economy, but it also brought tragic consequences for the people who laid claim to the land prior to this age of discovery.
