



acadience® reading 7–8

Oral Reading

Student Materials

Grade 7 | Progress Monitoring 2

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Farewell to Ireland

► It was a chilly, drizzly day in 1849 when the McDuffy family packed up their few belongings and left their tiny village in the north of Ireland. Margaret, the youngest, wept silently as she trudged with her family down the road that led to the port where they would board the ship to America. Her older brother, Aidan, couldn't wait to get away from Ireland and the effects of the potato famine.

Between 1847 and 1852, Ireland experienced a blight in which the country's main food source, potatoes, became diseased. By 1852, when the potato famine ended, roughly one million people had died from hunger and disease. For the McDuffys, the idea of abandoning Ireland before 1847 would have been unthinkable. Life on their potato farm was no bed of roses, certainly, but there had been plenty of food for everyone and they were happy enough. And when their spades turned up the first few blackened, inedible potatoes, they weren't too concerned. After all, every harvest included a few bad ones, and they blindly assumed the next would be fine.

How wrong they had been. The blight worsened, and soon nearly every potato they turned up was diseased. They couldn't turn to their neighbors for help, either, since everyone was in the same boat. Indeed, it wasn't long before the potato blight had spread its poisonous fingers into every corner of the country. As the stockpiles of the crop continued to disappear, food became scarce and people began to starve. The McDuffy family knew that unless they could escape this diseased land, the same fate might await them.

Aidan shuddered as he reflected upon what the family had been through the past two years. He also felt uneasy as he thought about the journey to America. The ship would be uncomfortable and crowded with other people in the same circumstances. Since everyone was already weakened by lack of food, diseases could spread just as rapidly among the passengers of the ship as they had on land among Ireland's population. There was no guarantee that the McDuffy family would even survive the journey. But if they stayed in Ireland, their chances would be even worse. They had to risk everything and hope for the best as they began a new life in America.

The Law of Inertia

► More than three centuries ago, scientist Isaac Newton formulated the Law of Inertia. Inertia is the tendency of moving objects to remain in motion or resting objects to remain at rest. Thus, the motion of an object only changes when an outside force is applied. The external force can be a push or pull, or anything that alters the object's speed. Newton's study of the motion of objects found that all objects resist change, whether in motion or at rest. Therefore, a soccer ball lying in a field will not move until a vigorous kick propels it into motion and it becomes a moving object.

Prior to Newton's Law of Inertia, scientists assumed that objects in motion eventually stopped, and that no external force was required. In fact, they asserted that a force was necessary to keep such an object moving. Newton's Law of Inertia stated that an object moving in a straight line and at a constant velocity would keep moving indefinitely without an opposing force. Velocity is a quantity that represents the speed of a moving object.

In other words, a kicked soccer ball will continue rolling at the same velocity until an outside force like gravity or friction interferes with its motion. Friction is the force between surfaces that resists the motion of one surface passing over another surface. When moving objects appear to slow or stop on their own, friction is probably the reason. Gravity is the external force that pulls objects toward the center of the earth.

Newton also saw that objects with greater mass resist change more than solid objects of lesser mass. This explains why it is easier, and less painful, to kick a soccer ball than a bowling ball across a surface. Suppose, though, that you manage to propel both balls into motion with equal velocity. According to Newton's Law of Inertia, if no external force stops their motion, the balls will continue rolling forever.

You can observe inertia the next time you are in a car. When the car slows suddenly or stops, your body continues to move forward at the same speed as before the brakes were applied. If your seat belt and shoulder harness do not perform as designed, you will keep going forward. This is the Law of Inertia in action.

The Breaking Point

► In 1775, the American colonies went to war against England, the country that governed them. This war, known as the American Revolution, would lead to the birth of a new nation that would become the United States of America. There were many reasons for the revolution, but most experts agree on a few key causes.

One of the main causes of the war was “taxation without representation.” Some years before, England had become burdened with war debt and was now trying to pay it off by passing laws that imposed taxes, or extra fees, on the colonists. The colonists felt that these tax laws were unjust. They argued that they should be able to send their own representatives to Parliament, England’s lawmaking body, or at least be able to vote in the elections. England refused to grant either of these demands.

A second reason for the war was England’s use of the colonies for its own profit. For 150 years, the colonies were required to make goods that could not be made in England, and to trade those goods only with England. Also, the colonies were not allowed to make any goods that England could produce. In the early years, when the population was small and relied heavily on England, this plan made sense. However, by the late 1700s, the colonies were self-sufficient. This relationship with England kept them from starting new industries, trading with other countries, and growing their own wealth. The colonists felt that they had earned the right to make their own decisions and they wanted to be free to govern themselves. For generations, colonists had built their own homes, developed customs, and lived by their own beliefs. The colonies had highly educated leaders, like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. These leaders believed that a government works only if the people agree to be ruled. They believed that a smaller government closer to home would make better laws, and that individuals should be free to make their own decisions.

For these and other reasons, the colonies declared independence from England. After six years of war, they became an independent nation that was dedicated to government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
