



acadience® reading 7–8

Oral Reading

Student Materials

Level 7 | Progress Monitoring 6

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Help on the River

► Most Saturday mornings, my buddy Jackson and I grab our gear and set off to the river to fish and canoe. But recently, the increased garbage in the water resulted in catching more trash than fish. Our lovely river has become less scenic and that really bothers me.

I hear people every day talking about helping the environment and saving the earth. However, I haven't actually noticed many people stepping up to the plate and really doing something beyond recycling. But a few Saturdays ago, while I waited on Jackson, I noticed a flyer that was stapled to the dock entrance. A river cleanup day was scheduled for the next weekend. I decided that I could spend one day doing my part to improve my favorite fishing spot.

The next Saturday, when we arrived at the river cleanup, the coordinator gave us a few instructions. Then he handed us plastic bags, gloves, and trash grabbers and put us straight to work. We scanned the area and felt ready to begin our attack on litter. As we spread out along the riverbanks, we searched out for the harmful trash along the river. Soon our overloaded trash bags became filled to the brim with Styrofoam cups, empty bottles, and candy wrappers. After we walked our allotted stretch of riverbank, we continued the trash quest in our canoe. Jackson and I collected several more bags of river debris, including several old tires.

Before we knew it, the morning had passed. I was amazed at the productive efforts of our small group. Looking at the giant pile of trash sacks ready to be hauled away, I was genuinely satisfied and proud to have contributed to such a productive effort.

Our leader informed us that he was working to get volunteers committed to clean up trash along the river. Although Jackson and I haven't joined the group that regularly cleans up the trash, we did promise ourselves to become better protectors of the river. Jackson and I saw the difference we made that day, and each week we routinely collect trash we find on our morning canoe jaunts. We see ourselves as continually proving that every one of us can put effort into what we believe and make a difference.

The Benefits of Bats

▶ Bats, often misunderstood and thought of as dangerous bloodsuckers, are actually beneficial mammals that play an important role in environments around the world. They foster the health of the ecosystems in which they live by spreading pollen, scattering seeds, and eating insects.

Over a thousand species of bats exist in the world. They live in colonies that can number in the millions and are largely nocturnal, or active during the night. The many species of bats eat a wide range of food, including insects, nectar, fruit, and fish. Their diverse eating habits, along with their large numbers, make bats important to the ecosystems in which they live. An ecosystem is a community of plants and animals that live together in an environment. One of the major benefits that bats provide to many ecosystems is insect control. More than half of all species of bats eat insects. In fact, bats are the major predator of nocturnal insects. A single small bat, of the group of species called microbats, can eat thousands of insects in one night, which means a colony of 500,000 bats can eat billions of insects in a single night. Some species of bats eat mosquitoes, which can spread disease, while other kinds of bats eat pests such as beetles and worms that can cause massive crop damage.

Other species, usually the larger megabats, drink nectar from a variety of blooming plants. These bats act as pollinators, spreading pollen as they fly from flower to flower. The giant saguaro cactus and organ pipe cactus depend on these bats to carry their pollen. Bats also pollinate cashews and bananas as well. Bats that eat fruit are crucial to certain ecosystems, particularly rainforests. The bats eat the ripe fruit, seeds and all, and as the fruit is digested, the seeds pass through and are left as droppings on the forest floor. The seeds of some species of plants will not sprout unless they have first passed through a bat. Without the bats, that plant species would not grow and the ecosystem would be less diverse. In turn, the animals that depend on those plants for food and shelter would be adversely affected.

The variety of life in an ecosystem is known as biodiversity. When there is more diversity, the ecosystem is healthier. Bats are a critical part of the health and diversity of many ecosystems on our planet.

Congress of Vienna

► In 1814, representatives from almost every country and kingdom across Europe met in Vienna, Austria. France was defeated by a coalition a month before, ending years of war. The meeting was called the Congress of Vienna, and it was the first of its type. It would later be cited as an example for the structure of other groups, most notably the United Nations. The decisions reached by the leaders at the Congress of Vienna impacted the entire continent of Europe for the next century.

Leading up to the Congress of Vienna, much of Europe was at war and had been for about 25 years. The French Revolutionary Wars began in 1792 between France and other countries. Those wars led to the Napoleonic Wars. One result of these wars was the final fall of the Holy Roman Empire.

The purpose of the meeting in Vienna was to resolve all the issues caused by the French wars and the fall of the Holy Roman Empire. Chaired by Austria, the Congress talked about boundaries and older treaties. The leaders also discussed how to settle future disputes.

The Congress met from fall of 1814 until spring of 1815. Almost every country in Europe was there, but Austria, Britain, Russia, and Prussia, often called the Great Powers, led the talks. Previous treaties between nations often relied on messengers instead of in-person discussions like those that occurred at the Congress.

Several treaties had been created before the Congress of Vienna met. The main result of this Congress was called the Final Act, and it brought all of the separate treaties together into one document. The act was signed on June 9, 1815. In it, the leaders of the Congress agreed to many territorial changes across Europe. France lost most of the land they had annexed in their wars, and the size of Russia and Prussia both increased. A German confederation of states was also created.

The Congress was widely criticized at the time because so many of the leaders did not have much say in the final agreement. But, it has been admired since and is credited with creating a balance of power across Europe. That balance resulted in peace and stability that lasted for almost 100 years.
