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Introduction

It was Buddy, an 18-month-old German shepherd, who had contacted 911.

Pennsylvania was besieged by a rodent epidemic so large that they had to import cats!

If a student read either one of these excerpts out of context, it is likely that the student would have a difficult time knowing which one was fiction and which was nonfiction. In addition, the student would have no idea how the two excerpts could be tied together.

If, on the other hand, the student read these excerpts in context and understood how they fit into an entire passage, the student would be able to answer with confidence that, as strange as it may seem, a man who suffered from massive seizures had trained his assistance dog to press programmed telephone buttons until a 911 operator came on the line and responded. The student would then be able to compare, contrast, or tie this fact to a fictitious passage in which one character uses historical facts to prove that domesticated cats are overlooked American heroes. (Both passages deal with helpful domestic animals.)

Many state tests now contain assessment sections that include paired passages. After reading two passages, students are expected to differentiate between fiction and nonfiction passages. They are expected to see how the two are connected and understand the underlying connection, as well as how they are dissimilar. They are asked to demonstrate their understanding of the passages by answering multiple-choice questions and providing written responses.

This multileveled task draws on many aspects of the reading and writing processes. The *Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills* Kit was created to provide practice with this type of exercise and assessment, including:

- ❖ Exercises that build reading comprehension
- ❖ Exercises that develop the skills needed to break down and analyze story elements
- ❖ Exercises that provide practice in keeping sequence and details from two sources separate
- ❖ Exercises that provide practice in proper letter formation, spacing, and spelling
- ❖ Practice with multiple-choice questions
- ❖ Practice with written-response questions on individual passage themes
- ❖ Practice with written-response questions that utilize information from two contrasting passages

Using the *Paired Passages* Kit

The Kit Contains:

The Passages

There are 25 units in *Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills*. Each individual unit contains two high-interest passages. The first passage is nonfiction. The second is fiction. Each passage is written at grade level with appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. The passages are tied together with a common theme. Unit subjects run the gamut from golf courses covered in crabs to a man who jumped from the stratosphere.

The units may be done sequentially, but they do not have to be. A teacher may choose to go out of order or pick specific units at different times because of class interest or individual student's needs. Units may be done as a class or assigned as individual work.

The passages can be found on the cards, in the guide, or in the enhanced e-book. They can be used with small groups for guided reading, pair-share activities, at centers, or independently by students. The option of reproducing the passages for each student gives teachers other opportunities, such as assigning meaningful homework activities for students.

The Multiple-Choice Questions

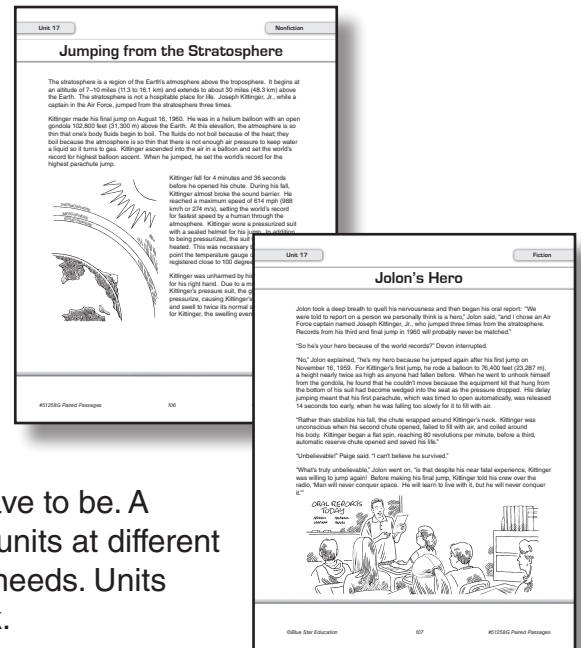
For each set of passages, there are multiple-choice questions. These are found in the Teacher Resource Guide directly following each set of passages. The answers are also conveniently located after each set of questions.

The first question focuses on the nonfiction passage. The second question focuses on the fiction passage. Answer choices for these questions come only from the passage the question stems refer to.

The third multiple-choice question asks what both passages have in common.

The fourth question requires the student to differentiate between the passages and understand what topic is covered in each one, as the answer choices are drawn from both passages.

Students can answer multiple-choice questions on the page by filling in the circle of the correct answer. Students can also answer multiple-choice questions by filling in the answer sheet located on page 9 of this book. Using this answer sheet provides practice responding in a standardized-test format.



Using the *Paired Passages Kit* (cont.)

Written Responses

A page requiring written responses is part of each unit. The first two written responses vary depending on the unit. They may require sequencing of events by filling in boxes, making lists, or even drawing a picture. Each response deals with only one of the passages. They are written to provide students with a foundation of sorting and organizing information. They provide exercise in referring back to and keeping two different pieces of literary prose separate in the reader's mind.

The last three written responses require higher-level responses. First, the students are asked to write out the main theme of each passage with complete sentences. Lastly, they are asked to respond to a question that requires thinking about or using information from both passages to answer.

A teacher's expectations of what constitutes a satisfactory response on these last questions may change over the year, or they may vary depending on the level of the student. For example, at the beginning of the year or with some students, a teacher may accept phonetic spelling and lack of punctuation. As specific topics are covered in class and students become more mature, a teacher may begin to check spelling, capitalization, ending punctuation, etc. Enough variation allows that all students, even those struggling in grade-level writing skills or those with advanced writing skills, can participate.

The Teacher Resource Book

This guide provides:

1. copies of all the stories and questions.
2. correlations to Common Core State Standards.
3. practice answer sheets.
4. individual answer keys for each set of passages.

Use this guide to make copies of the questions for students. The questions can help assess students' understanding of what they are reading. The enhanced e-book version of this guide can be used on an interactive whiteboard with an entire class, on individual computers, or to make copies directly from a computer.

Meeting Standards

Each passage and question in *Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills* meets one or more of the following Common Core State Standards. (© Copyright 2010. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.) For more information about the Common Core State Standards, go to <http://www.corestandards.org/>.

Literature Standards	Passage Title	Pages
Key Ideas and Details		
Standard 1: RL.8.1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	all passages	
Standard 2: RL.8.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.	all passages	
Standard 3: RL.8.3. Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.	What It Takes to Win French Fire Words An End to the Story Scorpion Charlatan Jungle Friend Jolon's Hero All Things Vanilla Why the Doctor Didn't Vote How It Went Letter from an Exchange Student Marathon Training Journal Scoop of the Century! Hamaguchi's Sacrifice	17–21 41–45 71–75 77–81 95–99 107–111 113–117 125–129 131–135 137–141 143–147 149–153 155–159
Craft and Structure		
Standard 4: RL.8.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	all passages	
Standard 5: RL.8.5. Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style.	What Madeline Found Good Body Math Scorpion Charlatan Jungle Friend Jolon's Hero Why the Doctor Didn't Vote How It Went Letter from an Exchange Student Marathon Training Journal Scoop of the Century! Hamaguchi's Sacrifice	59–63 65–69 77–81 95–99 107–111 125–129 131–135 137–141 143–147 149–153 155–159
Standard 6: RL.8.6. Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.	When Sandals Are Not Fine An Even Trade for Style Scoop of the Century! Hamaguchi's Sacrifice	11–15 83–87 149–153 155–159

Meeting Standards *(cont.)*

Literature Standards <i>(cont.)</i>	Passage Title	Pages
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity		
Standard 10: RL.8.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	all passages	

Informational Text Standards	Passage Title	Pages
Key Ideas and Details		
Standard 1: RI.8.1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.	all passages	
Standard 2: RI.8.2. Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.	all passages	
Standard 3: RI.8.3. Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).	A Tribe for the Gullible When a Hair Is Big A Lifesaving Fire Scorpion Scientist State Quarters Jumping from the Stratosphere A Conundrum on the Nazca Plain A Lifetime of Names Masters of Understatement Flying Blood Tsunami Survivor	22–27 34–39 40–45 76–81 100–105 106–111 118–123 124–129 130–135 148–153 154–159
Craft and Structure		
Standard 4: RI.8.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.	all passages	
Standard 5: RI.8.5. Analyze in detail the structure of a specific paragraph in a text, including the role of particular sentences in developing and refining a key concept.	Why the Doctor Shocked Missing for 28 Years State Quarters Jumping from the Stratosphere A Lifetime of Names Masters of Understatement Flying Blood	82–87 94–99 100–105 106–111 124–129 130–135 148–153
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity		
Standard 10: RI.8.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.	all passages	

The Most Daring Move

What was called “the most daring move ever seen on track” occurred on August 4, 1936, in Berlin, Germany. The “move” was performed by John Woodruff, a black American competitor, in the middle of the 800-meter running race at the 1936 Olympic Games. Young and inexperienced, Woodruff was only a 21-year-old college freshman when he earned his spot on the United States Olympic team.

At the start of the race, the 6-foot 3-inch (2 m) tall Woodruff became trapped, boxed in by the more experienced runners. All the spectators assumed Woodruff would lose. He was surrounded, and if he broke between the two leaders, he would be disqualified with a foul. Woodruff may have been an inexperienced novice, but he was a quick thinker. He made a decision, and as the crowd gasped in disbelief, he acted on it.

Woodruff came to a complete stop. After waiting until all the other runners in the pack had passed him, he quickly moved to an outside lane. Once alone and in the outer lane, Woodruff charged for the winner’s tape that stretched across the finish line. As the roars of the astonished crowd filled the stadium, Woodruff extended his stride so that it measured nearly 10 feet (3 m), and with a burst of speed he took the lead. Woodruff was victorious, with a winning time of 1 minute, 52.9 seconds.

Woodruff’s gold-medal win went down in history because of his daring move, but it was also significant for another reason. At that time, Adolf Hitler, Germany’s leader, was pushing his “master race” agenda. Though U.S. leaders considered boycotting the games to show that they thought this was wrong, the United States was racially segregated. Woodruff’s gold medal, as well as the gold medals won by his fellow black teammate Jesse Owens, showed those with prejudice that ability and superiority have nothing to do with skin color.



What It Takes to Win

The roar of the spectators filled the stadium, but Benjamin was oblivious to the sound. He heard nothing but the pounding of his own heart. An experienced and professional runner, Benjamin had been training for years. Now, at the age of 25, Benjamin was sure that his dedication would pay off and all of his training would lead him to victory. Yes, in just a few minutes, as soon as the starting gun was fired, Benjamin would finish the 800-meter run in record time and stand on the winner's podium to accept his Olympic gold medal.

When the starting gun was fired, Benjamin's body sprang to action with the suddenness of a well-oiled steel spring. He ran with the speed and muscled grace of a cheetah closing in on its prey. Confident of his form, he moved to the inner lane and picked up his speed. At the half-lap mark, Benjamin lengthened his stride and prepared to take the lead. Yes, as his powerful legs and arms moved in a fluid motion, Benjamin remained confident that he had the strength, endurance, and speed to win.

No, Benjamin did not move to the front of the pack. Instead, he began to panic as he realized that he was trapped. Somehow, Benjamin had gotten boxed in. Breaking between the two runners in front of him would get Benjamin disqualified on a foul, and there was no way around the runners next to him who were waiting for an opportunity to edge up on the pack and overtake the lead, too.

Understanding too well the seriousness of his predicament, Benjamin concluded that he had lost the gold. A professional to the core, Benjamin concentrated on what was obtainable: a third-place finish and a bronze medal.



Show What You Know *(cont.)*

6. Tell what the numbers mentioned in the story “The Most Daring Move” refer to.

4	
1936	
21	
6 3	
10	
1:52.9	

7. For each paragraph in the story “What It Takes to Win” write down if you think the author expected you to believe Benjamin would win a gold medal. Write down a phrase or part of a sentence from the paragraph that supports your answer.

<i>Paragraph 1</i>	<i>Paragraph 2</i>	<i>Paragraph 3</i>	<i>Paragraph 4</i>

Write three or four sentences that tell what each story is about.

8. “The Most Daring Move”

9. “What It Takes to Win”

10. Think about a time when you did something unexpected and daring. (Your daring move could be about sports, food, dress, society, or anything else you can think of.) Describe what you did, how people reacted, and what happened because of your daring move. (Use a separate piece of paper. Your writing should be a few paragraphs long.)