

Fluency 3	Activity Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a list of words from the story to the class that you pretend not to understand (or be able to pronounce, depending on the goal).
Grade 4–6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students review the story for themselves to find other words that are difficult for them to pronounce and/or understand the meaning of, and add those words to the board. • Students, with your guidance, group the words into two categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • those that someone in the class may have a clue about. • those that are a complete mystery.
Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To instill a class atmosphere where questions and curiosity about words are encouraged. • To make students aware of words that are challenging in the text. • To help students to be able to pronounce challenging and/or multisyllabic words. • To help students understand the meaning of challenging words in the text. 	

Prepare

- Print out one copy of [A Forgettable Adventure](#) for you and one for each student.
- Print out one copy of [Word Detectives - Word List from A Forgettable Adventure](#) for you and one for each student.
- Get a dictionary(ies), either book or online, one for you and one for each student.

Introduce



I need your help. When I read the story, I found some words that I had a hard time with. Write the words from the word list on the board.

Activity



1. When you read, it's common to find challenging words. But good readers rarely let them slip by. They become Word Detectives! Word Detectives use clues and tools to help them understand challenging words. I'm sure some of you are already great Word Detectives, and today, you'll all become better at it! The first thing you need to do is identify your suspects. I want you to read through the story and underline any words that you find challenging for any reason. Remember, good detectives would never let a suspect slip by if they weren't 100 percent sure of its meaning or pronunciation.
2. Begin the activity and give appropriate work time for the length of the passage.

Activity *Continued*

3. I'm glad to have such helpful detectives! Now, as we hear which suspects each detective has found, remember: Different detectives have different suspects. You may even be able to help other detectives with a suspect they have identified. But, don't call it out. That's not fair to all of the detectives here! After all of the suspects are on the board, there will be a chance to help.
4. Add students' words to yours on the board. Create an environment in which students are willing to share their uncertainty by referring back to your own list, sharing why you were uncertain, keeping the class from calling out replies, and by commending those willing to share their questions. Celebrate as the list grows bigger. We are really going to understand everything about this story after this!
5. Now that we have our suspects, we have some work to do. A good detective needs to be organized, so we'll organize our list. Make a table on the board with two columns:

Words we may know or have a clue about	Words that are very mysterious

6. If you think you can help with one of these challenging words, raise your hand, tell me which word, and I'll put it in the Words we may know column. Don't tell us the clue yet, that's coming soon! The words that no one feels he or she can help with will be put in the mysterious column.
7. After all of the words are sorted, invite students to explore the words for which they feel they have clues for the meaning or pronunciation.
 - a. This could come by way of a formal class discussion, with students individually sharing ideas.
 - b. For a more lively experience, students could be led toward first interviewing one another before sharing results with the group, like true detectives!
8. If these ideas do not arise from class sharing...
 - a. Point to phonemes, syllabication, and similar words for clues on pronunciation difficulties.
 - b. Discuss prefixes, suffixes, roots, and similar words that the class may know for difficulties with meaning.
9. After all of the words in the first column have been discussed and their clues recorded, it is time to check them and move on to those in the second column.

Activity Continued

- a. If your students are skilled in using the dictionary, divide them into groups and give them some words to look up. Each group should have some words from the first column, so they may test the class' theories, and some from the second column to research on their own.
- b. Optionally, you can read or paraphrase a definition to the class from the dictionary. **Let's see how good our detective instincts were!**

Wrap-Up



After all of the challenging words have been addressed, have the students reread the story and discuss how being a Word Detective has impacted their reading.

Support

Have students read to you. Note which words were challenging for the student to pronounce, or ask questions about the meanings of words they suspect may be challenging for the student.

Challenge

Have students "edit" the story. Instruct them to replace words in the story with synonyms that maintain the story's meaning.

What Do You See in the Scene? A Reading Scavenger Hunt

Fluency	Activity Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students reread the passage individually or in groups.• While reading, students look for elements of the story asked for by you and/or brainstormed by them.• Closing discussion compares the findings of students and clarifies the elements for all. t
Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To help students find and visualize important aspects of the story.	

Prepare

- Print out a copy of ["How Old You Are!"](#) for you and one for each student.
- Prepare a space on a whiteboard to write the story elements students will search for.

Introduce



1. **What's your favorite movie? Why is it your favorite movie? What happens in the movie?** Encourage students to share specific story elements about their favorite movie, such as the main character, hero, or villain, as well as the peak scene.
2. **When a director is making a movie, he or she needs to know a lot about the story. Each element is important to make the story come to life. What parts of the story would be important to consider if you were making a movie or play out of it?** Allow for group discussion and sharing. Help students consider:
 1. **Characters in the story**
 2. **Setting**
 3. **Dialogue**
 4. **Action**
3. **Today, your goal is to treat this story like you are a famous director. You'll need to find all the things that will help your audience see the story as you want them to. For example, the setting—where the story takes place, is important in most written work. Where does this story take place?** Allow for group discussion and sharing.

What Do You See in the Scene? A Reading Scavenger Hunt

Activity

Here are your directions. In this story, “[How Old You Are!](#)”, I want you to look for the following story elements, as you read. On the board, write the story elements that students should look for. Depending on reading level/ability consider:

1. Characters
 - a. Names and relevant information:
 - i. Chanda—four years old
 - ii. Dad
 - iii. Background family members
 - b. Traits
 - i. It could be inferred that Chanda is
 1. innocent/young/naive from her confusion
 2. Bossy for making her family all wear party hats
 3. Funny/outspoken for her final joke
 - ii. It could be inferred that her Dad is
 1. Kind for setting up the party for his daughter
 2. Inarticulate for asking the question in a confusing wayz
 - c. Motivations
 - i. Chanda wants everyone to wear hats at the party, wants to answer her Dad’s question precisely.
 - ii. Dad wants Chanda to have a great party, wants to document it for family members not present.
 - d. Feelings/thoughts
 - i. Chanda is initially happy, then confused, then sad, then returns to happy
 - ii. Dad may be seen as initially happy, but then feels bad when Chanda is sad
2. Setting
 - a. Physical descriptions: Dining room, colorful tablecloth, streamers, candlelight
3. Dialogue
 - a. Characters involved: Chanda and Dad
 - b. Meaning/purpose: Dad asks Chanda a question about her age, which she confuses because of the wording, “Can you tell me how old you are.” She repeats “How old you are.” There is confusion because Chanda thinks he wants her to repeat the phrase, but he actually wants her to answer the question.

Activity Continued

4. Action

- a. Movements by characters: Dad has decorated, Chanda blows out the candles, Dad films, they converse, Chanda cries, Dad comforts
- b. General “action” of the story
 - i. Problems—There is confusion because Chanda thinks he wants her to repeat the phrase, but he actually wants her to answer the question.
 - ii. Resolutions—Dad comforts and clarifies, Chanda jokes, they all eat cake.

Grades: 4–6

Lexile® Measure: 900L - 1000L

Mean Sentence Length: 14.03

Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.67

Word Count: 519

“How old you are!”

It was a simple question, really. It was certainly nothing that should’ve made one person cry and the rest of the room burst into laughter. But that’s exactly what it did. When Chanda’s dad asked it on her fourth birthday, he never could have anticipated this outcome.

The scene was beautifully set. In their dining room, Chanda’s dad had created a birthday wonderland. The table was covered with a colorful cloth, streamers were strung from the walls and the ceiling, and Chanda sat at the head of the table wearing the same cone-shaped hat that she had insisted all of the relatives surrounding her wear, too. Everyone sang and smiled as the darkened room suddenly filled with the light of the four candles being carried in on Chanda’s birthday cake.

Chanda’s dad eagerly filmed everything with his phone. He wanted to be able to share this moment with relatives who lived too far away to attend. And he thought it would be a really great touch to interview the birthday girl after she had blown out her candles. She blew them out, and as everyone clapped and the lights went on, he pointed his phone’s camera toward his daughter and asked, “Can you tell me how old you are?” Chanda smiled broadly as the smoke from the extinguished candles rose in front of her, and she replied with glee, “How old you are!”

What Do You See in the Scene? A Reading Scavenger Hunt

Everyone in the room, all of Chanda's aunts, uncles, and grandparents, began to smile at the innocence of the reply. Chanda's dad chuckled a bit as he tried to clarify his question, "No, no, sweetie. Can you tell me how old *you* are?" Chanda looked a little confused and tried to do what she thought her father was asking her to do: repeat his words. She sheepishly repeated with new emphasis, "How old *you* are?"

At this point, the room began to fill with chuckles from everyone. No one meant it maliciously; everyone just thought it was adorable that Chanda was repeating what her father was saying, rather than answering his question. In her defense, he was asking it in a somewhat confusing way. But at this point, he began to laugh so hard that he couldn't think of any other way to ask it, so he tried again through his snickering, "No! No! Ha-ha! Can you tell me how *old* you are?" Chanda began to frown as she repeated in frustration, "How *old* you are!"

Support

Guide students through finding the story elements and building a mental picture by posing questions such as:

- Who was in this story?
- Who is the story about?
- Where did the story take place?

Challenge

Guide students to go deeper into their visualization by writing those things that may not have been explicitly stated in the story. For example, What are the characters wearing? What does the room or landscape look like?

Wrap-Up



Discuss students' findings with the group. Make sure everyone in the group understands the essential elements of the story and how it evolves.

Comprehension: Claim and Evidence–Literary Grade: 5

LESSON INFORMATION	PASSAGE INFORMATION
<p>Goal: Close Reading and Discussion: Students read to stake a claim based on evidence, then collaborate to refine their claim.</p> <p>Time: 45 minutes</p> <p>Class Size: Small group</p> <p>Sample Passage Title: Pony Express Rider</p> <p>Materials Needed: Copies of the passage and copies of the individual poll sheet for each student.</p>	<p>Genre: Literary</p> <p>Grade: 5</p> <p>Passages: Select passages that include rich content and are on the higher end of the qualitative and quantitative text complexity continuum for the grade level.</p>

Introduction (10 minutes)

1. Preview the text

- Provide a brief explanation of the text.



We are going to read a new text today. It is about a girl who is a horseback rider and a special ride that she takes.

2. Explain the skill

- Provide a brief statement of the purpose of the activity.



Today we are going to use the things we read to support how we think about the text. It is called using evidence. After we read a text, I will share a statement with you. Your job will be to agree or disagree with that statement and use information or evidence from the text to support your answer.

Close Reading – Independent Response (18 minutes)

1. Engage in a group read

- Read the text as a group. Randomly call on students to read portions of the text. Ensure your pattern of calling on students is unpredictable so all students continue to read along.

- Highlight key vocabulary — define the words and provide examples. Have students share examples.
 - badge
 - smug
 - fault
 - expected
 - elected
 - historic
- Ask text-dependent questions throughout the reading.



Before we practice using evidence, let's read through the text as a group and answer some questions while we read.

Some examples:

Page	Question	Possible Response
1	What does Rachel think about her own horseback riding?	She thinks she rides better than her brother.
1	Why does Rachel's brother have a badge?	He is a Pony Express Messenger.
1	Is Rachel a Pony Express Messenger? Why or why not?	She is not because the Pony Express only hires men to carry the mail.
1	How many miles per day did Rachel's father and brother ride?	They rode as many as 100 miles a day.
2	Why can't Joseph ride one morning?	Joseph has a bad cold, and the doctor says he cannot work.
2	Why was Rachel's father upset that Joseph cannot ride?	He has important news that must be delivered.
2	Why does Rachel's father let her ride?	He lets her ride because there is important news to deliver.

2	How did Rachel's delivery go?	Rachel made the delivery in record time.
2	What important news did Rachel deliver?	She delivered the news that Abraham Lincoln had been elected president.

2. Preview the individual poll activity



Now that we've read the text, I am going to share a statement or sentence about the text. Your job is to decide whether you agree or disagree with this statement based on what we have read in the text.

Collecting details and information from the text supports how we think about the text. It is called using evidence. I want you to use evidence from the text to explain whether you disagree or agree with the statement. Your job will be 1) to agree or disagree with that statement, and 2) use information or evidence from the text to explain your answer.

3. Post the statement: Taylor is brave

- Read aloud and project or pass around a statement you have created for this text and the individual poll sheet. The statement should solicit a range of responses and text-based discussions. Make sure students are able to agree or disagree with the statement.



Now that we've read the text, I want you to think about this statement. Do you agree or disagree? Do you agree strongly or just a little with the statement, or do you disagree strongly or just a little with the statement. Circle the spot on the line that shows how much you agree or disagree.

4. Reread and complete the individual poll

- Have students reread the text and respond to the poll. They should write three pieces of evidence from the text that support their response.



Now you are going to read the text on your own. While you are reading, find pieces of evidence from the text that support your reason for agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. You should find at least three pieces of evidence. Write your evidence in the "explain your answer" section.

Examples of evidence from the text:

1. *Rachel traces the words Pony Express Messenger with her fingers.*
2. *Rachel says, "I may not have a badge, but I ride better than you do, so don't look so smug." (It seems like she envies her brother.)*
3. *Rachel says she is a better rider than Joseph.*
4. *Rachel begs her father to let her ride.*

5. Monitor independent reading

- While students are reading, walk around the room and ask questions.



What new words are you seeing? What new things are you learning? How are you building on what you already knew? What pieces of evidence support your opinion about the statement?

Close Reading – Share and Edit Responses (15 minutes)

1. Pair the students

- Pair each student with another student who had a different response to the statement.



Find a partner who had a different response to the individual poll.

2. Partner discussion

- Prompt students to compare their answers and try to convince their partner of their answer using the cited evidence.



Compare your answers and try to convince your partner that you are correct. Use the evidence you listed.

- Circulate during the discussion. Ask students to clarify their claims using evidence

3. Prompt students to revisit the statement

- Prompt students to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statement and then answer the question about whether their thinking changed or stayed the same after talking to their partner.



Let's go back to the individual poll. Now that you've talked with your partner, did your answer change? Explain why your answer stayed the same or changed. Use evidence from the text or from your partner.

Wrap Up (2 minutes)

1. Review the results

- Ask students whose agreement or disagreement with the statement changed or stayed the same.



Raise your hand if your partner convinced you to change your response? Raise your hand if your partner didn't.

2. Close the activity



Today we practiced using evidence to support our thinking about a text. We read *Pony Express Rider* together, and then individually. We found evidence to support whether we agreed or disagreed with the statement. We worked with our partners to try to convince them of our point of view based on the evidence we collected.

Common Core Anchor Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1:

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2:

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10:

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

INDIVIDUAL POLL

Rachel had always wanted to be a pony express messenger.

- **Poll 1**

Do you agree with the statement?

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

Explain Your Answer. Use evidence from the text.

- **Sharing**

My partner and I agreed or disagreed. (circle one)

- **Poll 2**

After your discussion, do you agree with the statement?

Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree

Has your thinking changed after speaking with your partner? If so, explain what he or she said that caused you to change your answer.

Has your thinking stayed the same after speaking with your partner? If so, explain what he or she said and why it didn't change your answer.

Comprehension 2	Activity Breakdown: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students review the two passages and the “clues” (descriptive/figurative language) they found in each.• Students/teacher organize the clues in Venn Diagram fashion.• Additional discussion compares and contrasts the two stories.
Grade 4–6	
Goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review each story and its descriptive/figurative language.• To create a visual representation of their text evaluation, providing an avenue for comparative analysis.• To discuss the similarities and differences of the stories.	

Prepare

- Print out a copy of [Riding Riddle](#) and [Roadways and Old Ways](#) for you and each student.
- Draw a Venn diagram on a whiteboard or large piece of paper to refer to in later activities.
- Provide pencils, pens, and/or highlighters.

Introduce



The mystery remains: could these two stories have been written by the same author? But before we dive into the clues, let’s remind ourselves what each story is about. Can someone tell me what *passage 1* was about? How about *passage 2*?

Now that we remember the basics, it’s time to review the clues! The language of each passage can help us guess whether or not they were written by the same person. Finding their similarities and differences will help us make the best guess.

Lead students in a general review/retelling of each story.

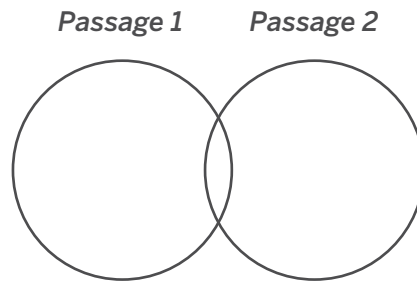
Activity



These two stories are not identical, so we may not find many instances with *exactly* the same language. What we are looking for is the *type* of language. For instance, the stories may take place in very different settings, but each story could still have a very rich description of its setting. That would be a similar type of language.

Draw a large Venn diagram with two circles on the whiteboard. Write the title of one of the stories above each circle.

Activity Continued



If we think there's something similar about the two stories, we will add that clue to the intersecting middle section of the Venn Diagram. For example, if both authors used many adjectives to describe their setting, we could write "Setting strongly described" in the middle section. But if we think that one story has something that the other doesn't, we will add it only to the circle for that story.

Use the questions to guide discussion about the clue found in each story:

1. **How did the author of the first passage describe its setting? Give me an example from the text.** The author of [Riding Riddle](#) uses the outside of the house and its backyard as a setting. They are described as:
 - a. House-- Tall windows, still, dark, ghost town, brick steps, stained-glass front door,
 - b. Backyard-- Soft grass, stone path leading to it with horseshoes painted on, enclosed by wooden gate/fence, with an ancient oak tree
2. **How did the author of the second passage describe the setting? Give me an example from the text.** The author of [Roadways and Old Ways](#) uses the interior of a Magneto-Pod as the setting. It is described as brand-new 2080 edition, like an elegant silver bullet with windows, hovering, luxury, darned, with all the comforts of a 2079 home: massaging recliners, a virtual-reality entertainment system, a self-cooking/cleaning kitchen, and a robotic toilet, and zipping by trees.
3. **Is this a similarity or a difference? Why do you think so?**
4. **Where does "setting description" go on our Venn diagram? Is this a similarity or a difference? Why do you think so?** Though the settings are very different, both could be thought of as richly described. The mood and time may be cited as a difference, but there is strong evidence for similarity in the type and amount of description.
5. **How did the author of each story describe the characters?**
 - a. The author of [Riding Riddle](#) uses Kailor as a main character, her parents as minor ones.
 - i. Kailor could be inferred to be of school age (young), inquisitive, active, intelligent, a problem-solver
 - ii. Her parents may be inferred as cautious, generous, kind, mischievous

To increase student engagement, pose the question first, provide wait time, and then call on individually selected students or on the whole group.

Show students how to find some of these examples in the passage.

Activity Continued

- b. The author of [Roadways and Old Ways](#) uses Rian and his grandfather as main characters.
 - i. Rian could be inferred to be disinterested initially, even a bit arrogant regarding his grandfather's "old-fashioned ways." Rian is later stunned at the wisdom of his grandfather
 - ii. Rian's grandfather could initially be inferred as distant, nostalgic, and perhaps even sad. Later he could be thought of as wise, or even scolding of Rian.
6. **Is this a similarity or a difference? Why do you think so?** Both stories describe the characters, but often in inferential ways. Also, both use family dynamics and age as key elements. This gives strong evidence for similarity.
7. **What about the action of the story?**
 - a. The author of [Riding Riddle](#) uses action as a key element of the story. Kailor moves a lot to solve the puzzle.
 - b. The author of [Roadways and Old Ways](#) uses action far less. The Magneto-Pod may be moving swiftly, but the main focus of the story is the dialogue.
8. **Is this a similarity or a difference? Why do you think so?** A difference.
9. **What about the authors' use of dialogue.**
 - a. The author of [Riding Riddle](#) uses some dialogue. Kailor speaks to herself and her parents speak to her briefly.
 - b. The author of [Roadways and Old Ways](#) as the key element of the story.
10. **Is this a similarity or a difference? Why do you think so?** A difference, though there is some similarity.
11. **Were there instances of figurative/descriptive language?**
 - a. Adjectives: These are words that describe nouns, like *beautiful* lake.
 - b. Adverbs: These are words that describe verbs, like *slowly* swam.
 - c. Descriptive verbs: These verbs are chosen for the rich picture they paint. Like "sprinted" vs. simply "ran."
 - d. Metaphors: These compare by calling one thing another. *The hot car was an oven.*
 - e. Similes: These compare two things using "like" or "as." The girl walked *slow as a snail*.
 - f. Personification: This gives human qualities to nonhuman things. *Time crawled by.*
 - g. Hyperbole: This is an intentional exaggeration. *"I told you a million times!"*

Activity Continued

12. Is there a similarity or difference here? Why do you think so?

Various opinions could arise here. There are few words or phrases that are exactly the same, but both authors do use a similar amount of description.

Grades: 4–6

Lexile® Measure: 800L - 900L

Mean Sentence Length: 11.81

Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.72

Word Count: 378

Riding Riddle

Kailor could tell that something about her house looked strange as soon as she got off the school bus. Usually, she could look through the tall windows and see lights on inside, or even see her family moving around. But everything seemed oddly still today...and dark, like a ghost town. She needed to investigate further.

As she walked up the brick steps to her large stained-glass front door, she noticed a note taped to it. "Ah-ha!" she said to herself, "A clue!" She slowly read the note aloud, "Where you learned to ride without training wheels." Kailor was puzzled for a moment; it had been almost three years since she first learned to ride her bicycle. "Hmmm...where did I do that?"

First, she tried to picture her bike with training wheels. She remembered how exciting it was just to pedal around on her "big-girl" bike. Then, she remembered her mom and dad worrying about taking the training wheels off. So, instead of having her ride on concrete, they had taken Kailor to the soft grass of... "the BACKYARD!" It suddenly came to her.

Kailor flew off the front porch, turned the corner, and began to run down the stone path toward the backyard. As she did, she noticed more clues on the brown rocks her feet sailed over. Someone had painted something down the length of the path that looked like two columns of silver letter n's. Or maybe they were upside-down u's? Kailor couldn't tell what they were, and she wasn't about to stop to investigate. She had to get to the backyard as fast as her legs would carry her.

When she reached the tall wooden gate that opened into the backyard, she suddenly solved the puzzle as she pushed the gate open. "Those weren't letter n's or u's...they were...horseshoes!" And there, behind the gate, under the shade of an ancient oak tree, eating mouthfuls of grass, was a golden horse with a white mane and a tail that seemed to float in the air like threads of silk. Her mom and dad stepped out from behind the tree to see Kailor's jaw drop to the ground. "Well..." her dad laughed, "for your birthday this year, we thought you needed to learn how to ride something else."

Activity Continued

Grades: 4–6
Lexile® Measure: 800L - 900L
Mean Sentence Length: 11.84
Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.51
Word Count: 3

Roadways and Old Ways

"I can remember when these roads were still made of pavement, asphalt, rocks...and people still drove on them in cars with rubber wheels..." Rian's grandfather's voice trailed off as he looked out the window at the trees zipping by, getting lost in memories that seemed to pass before him just as quickly. "How long ago was that, Grandpa?" Rian questioned without looking up from his holo-phone; mostly, he asked just to bring his grandpa back to reality.

"Well..." his grandpa started, turning to look at Rian, "they started covering the old roads, the major highways anyway, with magnetic tracks back in 2045. And by 2055 they'd covered almost all the roads in every major city...and it just kept going. And people kept buying these darned Magneto-Pods! And now here we are, in good old 2079, and there's not any real roads left! People got so lazy they can't even bother to drive themselves anymore!"

Rian chuckled at his grandfather's old-fashioned notions, as their brand-new 2080 edition Magneto-Pod hovered above the magnetic tracks, gliding them to their destination at 150mph like an elegant silver bullet with windows. He finally looked up from his phone and asked, "Grandpa, you mean you'd rather drive yourself? Be forced to face forward—sitting in rows? Strapped onto your seat by a belt? In a vehicle powered by dangerous and polluting fossil fuels? You'd prefer all of that to being here in this luxury Magneto-Pod? Really?"

Rian's grandfather looked around the interior of the shining vessel. It had all the comforts of a 2079 home: massaging recliners, a virtual-reality entertainment system, a self-cooking/cleaning kitchen, and a robotic toilet. You could practically live in it. In fact, many people did live in their Magneto-Pods. But Rian's grandfather had never been that impressed with them. He leaned forward, toward his grandson sitting across from him, pushed back his glasses and said, "Listen, kid, just because you can get a robot or a machine to do everything for you now... It doesn't mean that you should let it, or that it's better for you. There's something to be said for learning how to do things on your own." Rian sat stunned. He had never thought of it like that before.

Grades: 4–6
Lexile® Measure: 800L - 900L
Mean Sentence Length: 10.09
Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.59
Word Count: 656

A Forgettable Adventure

Captain Black woke in a daze, the crew of her Starglider unconscious, strewn on the floor all around her. She grabbed her head to keep the room from spinning as she tried to remember what had happened. The last thing she could recall was sitting in her chair, directing her crew toward the mysterious planet Amnesion3. Her memory was fuzzy after that. But through her fog, she could sense scattered memories of the atmosphere getting rough as they had approached to land. Had they crash-landed? Is that why everyone was unconscious? Is that why she had been unconscious?

She tried to rouse the crew for a moment, poking them, yelling at them. Nothing seemed to work. Captain Black wasn't surprised, as she had always been stronger than the rest of her crew. If they had crash-landed, she was certain she would've been the first to recover, anyway. She stood up and began looking around, trying to piece together what had happened. This was the first-ever exploration of Amnesion3, and Captain Black was determined not to let it end in disaster. Explorations of the other two planets in this system, Amnesion1 and Amnesion2, had not gone well.

The crew exploring Amnesion1 had suffered an embarrassing fate. The atmosphere of Amnesion1 was filled with a gas that, unknown to them, could permeate any spacesuit and immediately render anyone who breathed it unconscious. The famously embarrassing event involved the crew arriving, putting on their spacesuits, walking out of the ship to explore, and promptly losing consciousness. Other pilots that Captain Black knew still joked about that one. An exploration of Amnesion2 hadn't gone any better. Its atmosphere was filled with an equally potent gas that caused almost everyone who breathed it to get dizzy, think less clearly, and eventually forget the last several hours of their lives. Equally embarrassing, the crew of this expedition put on their spacesuits, walked out, and then promptly forgot why they were there and what to do next.

Captain Black wasn't about to let shameful moments like these to happen to her, nor would she let an opportunity like this slip away. Moving toward the door of the command center, she was ready to head down the hall to gather her spacesuit. She wanted to get to the planet's surface. Strangely, as she tried to pull open the

heavy metal door, the Starglider's computer spoke, "Warning! Command center air replacement complete. Hallway air replacement INCOMPLETE! Open door anyway?"

Puzzled, Captain Black paused. She couldn't imagine why the air of the command center had been replaced...or why the hallway's air was being replaced. Furthermore, she didn't remember starting that procedure, nor did she recall the computer doing so. "A malfunction. I'll handle it later," she muttered before commanding, "COMPUTER! OPEN!" The door's locks released, and she began to push down the large metal handle, breaking the pressure seal. A quick puff of air told her the door was opening.

Just then, from behind her, "Captain! Not again!" It was a member of her crew. Bewildered, she looked at him as the door slowly creaked open and he continued frantically, "SHUT THE DOOR! We crashed! Gases came into the ship! Like Amnesia1 plus Amnesia2! It's Amnesia3! Knocks you out and makes you forget! SHUT THE DOOR!"

With all strength and haste, Captain Black tried to push the heavy door back into place. But it was too late. Captain Black began to feel sleepy and droop, and so did the crew member who had just awoken. He continued in a fading voice, "I'm the only one...not affected by the memory part, Captain...you have to stop doing this... you've already...opened that door... seven..."

Captain Black was shocked, but could only sleepily yawn while trying to yell, "SEVEN TIMES?"

The crewmember continued, "Seven...ty-seven times..."

Soon, everyone was once again asleep, and once again the computer's voice was the only one to be heard. "Warning! Command center air compromised! Sealing command center door, now. Beginning air replacement, now."

Word Detectives - Word List

Fluency 3, Grades 4–6

Passage: [A Forgettable Adventure](#)

Suggested words: daze, strewn, atmosphere, rouse, recover, disaster, permeate, render, potent, furthermore, procedure, malfunction, bewildered, haste

*Students should add their own words from the passage

Words we may know or have a clue about	Words that are very mysterious

Grades: 4–6
Lexile® Measure: 900L - 1000L
Mean Sentence Length: 14.03
Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.67
Word Count: 519

“How old you are!”

It was a simple question, really. It was certainly nothing that should’ve made one person cry and the rest of the room burst into laughter. But that’s exactly what it did. When Chanda’s dad asked it on her fourth birthday, he never could have anticipated this outcome.

The scene was beautifully set. In their dining room, Chanda’s dad had created a birthday wonderland. The table was covered with a colorful cloth, streamers were strung from the walls and the ceiling, and Chanda sat at the head of the table wearing the same cone-shaped hat that she had insisted all of the relatives surrounding her wear, too. Everyone sang and smiled as the darkened room suddenly filled with the light of the four candles being carried in on Chanda’s birthday cake.

Chanda’s dad eagerly filmed everything with his phone. He wanted to be able to share this moment with relatives who lived too far away to attend. And he thought it would be a really great touch to interview the birthday girl after she had blown out her candles. She blew them out, and as everyone clapped and the lights went on, he pointed his phone’s camera toward his daughter and asked, “Can you tell me how old you are?” Chanda smiled broadly as the smoke from the extinguished candles rose in front of her, and she replied with glee, “How old you are!”

Everyone in the room, all of Chanda’s aunts, uncles, and grandparents, began to smile at the innocence of the reply. Chanda’s dad chuckled a bit as he tried to clarify his question, “No, no, sweetie. Can you tell me how old *you* are?” Chanda looked a little confused and tried to do what she thought her father was asking her to do: repeat his words. She sheepishly repeated with new emphasis, “How old *you* are?”

At this point, the room began to fill with chuckles from everyone. No one meant it maliciously; everyone just thought it was adorable that Chanda was repeating what her father was saying, rather than answering his question. In her defense, he was asking it in a somewhat confusing way. But at this point, he began to laugh so hard that he couldn’t think of any other way to ask it, so he tried again through his snickering, “No! No! Ha-ha! Can you tell me how *old* you are?” Chanda began to frown as she repeated in frustration, “How *old* you are!”

The crowd of her relatives absolutely roared with laughter at the simple mistake. But the sounds and all the confusion were finally too much for Chanda to handle, and she burst into tears. Her dad rushed over to comfort her and explain the situation. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart! I just wanted you to tell the camera how old you are today." Chanda wiped away her tears and pointed at the cake, "Can't you even count candles?! I'm *four*!" At this, her family nearly fell over from laughing so hard. Telling such a good joke finally turned Chanda's frown upside down, and the whole room was then filled with smiles as the cake was served.

Pony Express Rider

Story by Linda Bullock
Illustrations by Sony Thokchom



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Rachel's fingers traced the words *Pony Express Messenger* on her twin brother's badge. He watched with a grin. Rachel looked up and said, "I may not have a badge, but I ride better than you do, so don't look so smug."

"You're right," agreed Joseph, her brother. "But it's not my fault the Pony Express hires only men to carry the mail."

The twins' father was a Pony Express stationmaster who kept riders like his son on the move, traveling east and west every day. They were expected to ride fast and hard, and they did, covering as many as 100 miles a day.

One morning, Rachel's mother sent her to bring the doctor for Joseph, who had a bad cold. "There'll be no work for you today, Joseph," the doctor declared. He told Rachel, "Your father will need to find another rider today."

Rachel told her father, who became upset. "I have no other riders, and worse, I have important news that must be delivered!" he blurted.

"Let me ride," Rachel begged him. Her father hesitated, then said, "Okay, Rachel, but just this once, do you understand? I wouldn't do this if the news were not so important."

Rachel changed quickly into her brother's clothes. In minutes, she began her race toward the west. She made her delivery in record time and then turned to ride for home.

Back at home, her dad patted Rachel's shoulder and said, "You were part of an historic ride. You helped deliver the news that Abraham Lincoln has been elected president!"

Grades: 4–6
Lexile® Measure: 800L - 900L
Mean Sentence Length: 11.81
Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.72
Word Count: 378

Riding Riddle **A Mystery**

Kailor could tell that something about her house looked strange as soon as she got off the school bus. Usually, she could look through the tall windows and see lights on inside, or even see her family moving around. But everything seemed oddly still today...and dark, like a ghost town. She needed to investigate further.

As she walked up the brick steps to her large stained-glass front door, she noticed a note taped to it. “Ah-ha!” she said to herself, “A clue!” She slowly read the note aloud, “Where you learned to ride without training wheels.” Kailor was puzzled for a moment; it had been almost three years since she first learned to ride her bicycle. “Hmmm...here *did* I do that?”

First, she tried to picture her bike with training wheels. She remembered how exciting it was just to pedal around on her “big-girl” bike. Then, she remembered her mom and dad worrying about taking the training wheels off. So, instead of having her ride on concrete, they had taken Kailor to the soft grass of...“the BACKYARD!” It suddenly came to her.

Kailor flew off the front porch, turned the corner, and began to run down the stone path toward the backyard. As she did, she noticed more clues on the brown rocks her feet sailed over. Someone had painted something down the length of the path that looked like two columns of silver letter *n*’s. Or maybe they were upside down *u*’s? Kailor couldn’t tell what they were, and she wasn’t about to stop to investigate. She had to get to the backyard as fast as her legs would carry her.

When she reached the tall wooden gate that opened into the backyard, she suddenly solved the puzzle as she pushed the gate open. “Those weren’t letter *n*’s or *u*’s...they were...horseshoes!” And there, behind the gate, under the shade of an ancient oak tree, eating mouthfuls of grass, was a golden horse with a white mane and a tail that seemed to float in the air like threads of silk. Her mom and dad stepped out from behind the tree to see Kailor’s jaw drop to the ground. “Well...” her dad laughed, “for your birthday this year, we thought you needed to learn how to ride something else.”

Grades: 4–6
Lexile® Measure: 800L - 900L
Mean Sentence Length: 11.84
Mean Log Word Frequency: 3.51
Word Count: 367

Roadways and Old Ways

A Science Fiction Story

“I can remember when these roads were still made of pavement, asphalt, rocks...and people still drove on them in cars with rubber wheels...” Rian’s grandfather’s voice trailed off as he looked out the window at the trees zipping by, getting lost in memories that seemed to pass before him just as quickly. “How long ago was that, Grandpa?” Rian questioned without looking up from his holo-phone; mostly, he asked just to bring his grandpa back to reality.

“Well...” his grandpa started, turning to look at Rian, “they started covering the old roads, the major highways anyway, with magnetic tracks back in 2045. And by 2055 they’d covered almost all the roads in every major city...nd it just kept going. And people kept buying these darned Magneto-Pods! And now here we are, in *good old* 2079, and there’s not any *real* roads left! People got so lazy they can’t even bother to drive themselves anymore!”

Rian chuckled at his grandfather’s old-fashioned notions, as their brand-new 2080 edition Magneto-Pod hovered above the magnetic tracks, gliding them to their destination at 150mph like an elegant silver bullet with windows. He finally looked up from his phone and asked, “Grandpa, you mean you’d rather drive yourself? Be forced to face forward—sitting in rows? Strapped onto your seat by a belt? In a vehicle powered by dangerous and polluting fossil fuels? You’d prefer all of that to being here in this luxury Magneto-Pod? Really?”

Rian’s grandfather looked around the interior of the shining vessel. It had all the comforts of a 2079 home: massaging recliners, a virtual reality entertainment system, a self-cooking/cleaning kitchen, and a robotic toilet. You could practically live in it. In fact, many people did live in their Magneto-Pods. But Rian’s grandfather had never been that impressed with them. He leaned forward, toward his grandson sitting across from him, pushed back his glasses and said, “Listen, kid, just because you can get a robot or a machine to do everything for you now... It doesn’t mean that you should let it, or that it’s better for you. There’s something to be said for learning how to do things on your own.” Rian sat stunned. He had never thought of it like that before.