

Welcome to Passages

THE INSIDE STORY

Since its release in 1978, the *Passages* reading series has attracted a devoted following of young readers. Many secondary students who had never finished a whole book in their lives have found success with the *Passages* stories. Ms Schraff has received countless letters from proud students who say that they have read *all* the *Passages* novels and beg her for more!

It is due to this enthusiastic student response that the decision was made to update and expand the *Passages* series. We hope that your students will enjoy the books and learn, with the help of the workbooks, how to sharpen their reading skills at the same time.

THE PURPOSE

Passages is a unique program that combines reading for enjoyment with vocabulary and comprehension skill development. The goal of the program is fourfold:

1. To provide relevant, high-interest stories that will motivate students to read more
2. To teach and reinforce students' basic vocabulary and comprehension skills
3. To enhance students' success in comprehending what they have read
4. To encourage students to personally interact with each story

THE AUDIENCE

The *Passages* program is for junior and senior high school students who are below-year-level readers. Each *Passages* novel offers sophisticated content, with mature themes of interest to most adolescents.

The eleven novels are divided into two groups as follows:

Year three/four reading level:

An Alien Spring
Don't Blame the Children
Ghost Boy
The Haunting of Hawthorne
Please Don't Ask Me to Love You
The Power of the Rose (Sequel to *The Haunting of Hawthorne*)
Summer of Shame (Sequel to *An Alien Spring*)
To Slay the Dragon (Sequel to *Don't Blame the Children*)
The Vandal

Year five/six reading level:

Bridge to the Moon (Sequel to *Maitland's Kid*)
The Shining Mark

The eleven *Passages* workbooks were designed to provide students with valuable instruction and practice with vocabulary and comprehension skills. The workbooks help students practise vocabulary and comprehension strategies which can be generalised to other readings. These important strategies are taught using high-interest and now familiar excerpts from the *Passages* novels.

The Components

THE PASSAGES NOVELS

The eleven *Passages* novels have been carefully edited to fit multicultural, non-sexist guidelines and to reflect the current lifestyles of secondary school students.

The novels have also been carefully and sensitively edited for readability.

Passages novels are typical young adult paperbacks. The plots centre around teens caught up in the stresses of contemporary living. Problems such as child abuse, violence in the schools, xenophobia, ethnic identity crises, academic stress, substance abuse, troubled or broken families, low self-esteem, peer pressure and ostracism, and death are all treated in the novels. Fast-moving plots keep students' attention, and upbeat endings suggest ways for student to cope.

The novels are approximately 50-60 pages long. A plot summary for each *Passages* novel is provided in this guide.

THE PASSAGES WORKBOOKS

The eleven *Passages* workbooks use material from the companion *Passages* novels to boost students' vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Each workbook divides a selected novel into three reading assignments. For each assignment, both a vocabulary unit and a comprehension unit are provided. The six units in each workbook are arranged in this pattern:

- Unit 1, Chapters 1-3: Vocabulary
- Unit 2, Chapters 1-3: Comprehension
- Unit 3, Chapters 4-6: Vocabulary
- Unit 4, Chapters 4-6: Comprehension
- Unit 5, Chapters 7-10: Vocabulary
- Unit 6, Chapters 7-10: Comprehension

Passages exercises are brief. Each exercise focuses on a single, clearly identified skill or strategy. Directions are kept short and simple.

Vocabulary

Each vocabulary unit focuses on teaching twelve new words selected from the companion *Passages* novel. The unit begins with a self-check of the target words and ends with a quiz. Between the pre- and post-tests, several exercises provide instructional practice of three types: definitional, contextual and associational.

Research has shown that students learn a word best when they (1) deal with its use in context, (2) associate it with other related words and (3) experience a definition of the word. *Passages* exercises give students practice with every word in each of these settings. These exercises not only help students master vocabulary but also teach them strategies for future vocabulary development.

The six activities in each vocabulary unit are listed below:

- Selection Words: Self-Check
- Defining Words from Context
- Choosing a Definition
- Using Words in Context
- Classifying Words
- Checking Your Understanding

SELECTION WORDS: SELF-CHECK

The first exercise in the vocabulary unit is a self-test which asks students to evaluate their knowledge of target words. Students are given a list of twelve words from the reading assignment. They are asked to circle words that are completely new and underline those which they think they recognise but cannot precisely define.

DEFINING WORDS FROM CONTEXT

In this activity students study each of the twelve vocabulary words in the context of passages taken from the novel. Given an excerpt and highlighted vocabulary word, students first predict a meaning for each target word. Then they check their prediction with a dictionary. Because a word can have many different meanings, students use both context and a dictionary to refine a definition.

CHOOSING A DEFINITION

This exercise reinforces knowledge students gained in the previous vocabulary activity. Target words are presented in a sentence from the novel. Three definitions follow. From the context, students select the best definition of the word.

USING WORDS IN CONTEXT

Having experienced the target words in the context of the novel, students extend their understanding of these words into other situations. In this activity students are given original sentences and asked to select the correct vocabulary word to fill in the blank. Thus, students have a chance to apply their knowledge of the word in a new setting.

CLASSIFYING WORDS

A list of categories and two words that fit each category are provided. Category groupings include synonyms, antonyms, size, intensity, resemblance and general association, among others. Students must decide which vocabulary word belongs in each category. This exercise helps students understand how their new vocabulary words relate to other concepts.

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

A true/false exercise concludes each vocabulary unit. Statements that contain a vocabulary word are given, and students must determine the accuracy of the statement. The activity serves as a summation, allowing students a chance to test their understanding of each word.

Comprehension

The exercises in the comprehension units give students instruction and practice with main ideas, details, inferences, figurative language, referents, summaries and critical reading. These comprehension strategies transfer to books within this series and to other reading materials students encounter.

In the comprehension units, as in the vocabulary units, students work with excerpts from the companion *Passages* novel.

Here are the seven activities in each comprehension unit:

- Tracking Main Ideas
- Getting the Facts
- Making Inferences
- Interpreting Figurative Language
- Using Referents
- Summarising
- Reading Critically

TRACKING MAIN IDEAS

In the opening exercise students read excerpts from the story and choose a statement that sums up the main idea of each excerpt. To answer correctly they must differentiate among false details, true but minor details and the main idea.

GETTING THE FACTS

Students read excerpts from the novel in this activity and then select the detail that best completes a factual statement about each passage. The exercise provides students with practice in locating supporting details, causes and effects, sequences and comparisons.

MAKING INFERENCES

In this exercise students make inferences by “reading between and beyond the lines”. They select from among three choices the meaning implied by the author’s words. Students combine word clues within the excerpt with their own prior knowledge and experience to make the correct inferences.

INTERPRETING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

Students determine the meanings of idioms and figures of speech in this exercise. Using the clues provided in the context, they select the one statement that best shows the intended meaning of each figurative phrase. The activity provides practice in using context to interpret an author’s intended meaning of figurative expressions.

USING REFERENTS

In each referent exercise several words which replace or refer to other words are highlighted in the passage. Students are asked to identify the word or words each referent points out or replaces. The exercise helps students understand how words serve to represent other words or ideas in a passage.

SUMMARISING

Students practise recalling story events in sequence in the summarising activity. From among three paragraphs, they choose the one that best outlines the major events and ideas of a segment of the novel. This exercise provides practice in accurately remembering and summarising text.

READING CRITICALLY

In the final exercise students respond critically to a major idea or opinion from the selection. Students react to statements quoted in each of three passages from the story by explaining their own points of view. The exercise encourages individual interaction with the text.

Response Keys

The answers to each *Passages* exercise are provided in this guide. Teachers may wish to check all activities themselves, allow students to self-check or have students cross-check. Permission is given to make copies of keys for use within the classroom.

1 Vocabulary

SELECTION WORDS: SELF-CHECK

Responses will vary.

DEFINING WORDS FROM CONTEXT

Definitions will vary.

CHOOSING A DEFINITION

1. b; 2. c; 3. b; 4. a; 5. a; 6. c;
7. b; 8. a; 9. c; 10. c; 11. b; 12. a

USING WORDS IN CONTEXT

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. triumphs | 7. commotion |
| 2. well groomed | 8. warm |
| 3. pampered | 9. grief |
| 4. jinx | 10. flaunting |
| 5. flustered | 11. scrawled |
| 6. sagging | 12. disjointed |

CLASSIFYING WORDS

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. flaunting | 7. disjointed |
| 2. well groomed | 8. scrawled |
| 3. pampered | 9. flustered |
| 4. commotion | 10. grief |
| 5. a jinx | 11. sagging |
| 6. warm | 12. triumphs |

CHECKING YOUR UNDERSTANDING

1. T; 2. T; 3. F; 4. F; 5. T; 6. F;
7. T; 8. T; 9. F; 10. F; 11. T; 12. F

2 Comprehension

TRACKING MAIN IDEAS

1. c; 2. a; 3. c; 4. c; 5. b

GETTING THE FACTS

1. a; 2. b; 3. b; 4. b; 5. a

MAKING INFERENCES

1. b; 2. a; 3. a; 4. c; 5. b

INTERPRETING FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

1. b; 2. c; 3. b; 4. b; 5. a

USING REFERENTS

- his history essay
- Soroya's being in an accident
- Soroya's condition
- Mr Campbell
- Tony's out-of-control temper

SUMMARISING

a

READING CRITICALLY

There are no wrong responses to these questions. Students should share their answers with a teacher or classmates.