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YOU THINK YOU HAVE TROUBLES

The life of a child in Puritan New England was a hard one. It was quite different from the lives of most American children today. Children were members of very large families. Many women had 20 babies, and there are records of women who had as many as 27 children. This meant that the average Puritan child had many brothers and sisters. When mothers died giving birth, the fathers remarried as soon as possible. This meant that many Puritan children had stepmothers or stepfathers or half-brothers or half-sisters.

But Puritan families did not stay large for very long. The death rate in those days was very high. The winters were cold. Houses were poorly heated. And medical knowledge was not what it is today. Many children died in infancy. Those that did not die in their first year frequently died later of childhood diseases such as smallpox, chicken pox, or measles. There were also many accidents that claimed lives. Many boys and girls who went skating, for example, fell through thin ice and drowned.

The children of the Puritans were taught to fear God’s punishment if they were not good. They were taught to read at a very young age so that they could study scripture. Some children could read by the time they were four years old. Children were taught to constantly examine their conscience and to think and do good deeds.

The early Puritans thought most games were evil things and works of the devil. If children were caught playing ball, or marbles, or even swimming, they were punished. Childhood was not meant for games; it was meant for studying religion.

Strangely enough, however, one of the things that people today consider bad for children was not considered bad by the Puritans. That is alcohol. Puritan children drank wine and beer almost every day. The Puritans saw nothing wrong with this. They looked upon beer and wine as nutritious and even necessary food.

The Puritans believed that unless children were whipped, they would be spoiled. So children who misbehaved were whipped with every kind of device imaginable. They were whipped with whips, switches, boards, and pieces of leather. Some parents and teachers whipped students only on the calves of their legs. Others whipped only on the bottoms of the feet.

It was rough being a child in Puritan New England.



Write “True” after a sentence if it is true. Write “False” if it is false.

- 1. The Puritans punished children who were caught swimming. _____
- 2. The Puritans punished children who drank beer. _____
- 3. A Puritan child often had many brothers and sisters. _____
- 4. Puritan children were taught to read when they were very young. _____

Answer the following.

- 5. What is the main idea of the story? _____

- 6. What do you think the title of the story means? _____

- 7. Underline three sentences that explain why so many Puritan children died young.
- 8. Circle three games or sports that were thought to be evil.
- 9. What did the Puritans think wine and beer were? _____
- 10. What questions do you still have about Puritan children? _____



BASIC COMPREHENSION
Organization: Categories — 14

SPORTS CATEGORIES

Sports can be classified in many ways. Health experts often classify sports according to how many kilojoules people burn up performing them. Sports such as running, bicycling, football, and swimming rank as high energy sports because people burn up a lot of kilojoules doing these things. Sports such as baseball and golf rank as low energy sports because they do not require much energy.

Other people classify sports according to whether they are indoor or outdoor sports, or both. Sports such as football, archery, field hockey, and baseball are outdoor sports. Sports such as racquetball, wrestling, and table tennis are indoor sports. Some sports fall into a third category because they can be played indoors or outdoors. Tennis and badminton are examples. Also in the third category are swimming, ice skating, roller skating, and even bicycling.

Another popular way of classifying sports is according to whether they are team sports or individual sports. Some common team sports are hockey, basketball, football, soccer, and volleyball. Some individual sports involve competition with another player. Examples are tennis and squash. Other individual sports do not require an opposing player. Examples are swimming, skiing, jogging, and bicycling.

Sports can also be classified as contact sports or non-contact sports. Football, wrestling, and hockey are contact sports. The bodies of the players normally make "contact." They bump into one another. Tennis, swimming, and bicycling are non-contact sports; the players do not normally bump into one another or make bodily contact.

All those possible categories are easy to understand. What is not easy to understand is the classification of sports into categories such as racket sports, bat-and-ball sports, hoop sports, and so on. Too many of these categories would have to be developed to include all sports.



1. How are sports classified in the first paragraph? _____

2. How are sports classified in the second paragraph? _____

3. How are sports classified in the third paragraph? _____

4. How are sports classified in the fourth paragraph? _____

5. In which two classifications would baseball and football be together?
 (a) _____ (b) _____
6. What is a contact sport? _____
7. List 3 sports that can be played indoors *or* outdoors. (a) _____
 (b) _____ (c) _____
8. If you wanted to know which sports you could play alone, which classification would you be interested in?

9. If you wanted to know which sports could help you lose weight, which classification would you be interested in?

10. What problem is caused by classifying sports into categories such as racket sports, bat-and-ball sports, hoop sports, etc.? _____



BASIC COMPREHENSION
Vocabulary: Subordinators — 24

THE NORTHWEST PASSAGE

The Northwest Passage is something that does and does not exist, and that alone makes its history very interesting. Its history is related to the fact that America was discovered by Columbus quite by accident. Columbus was sailing west in order to reach the East and the Orient of India and China. These countries were the source of spices and other wealth craved by the merchants of Europe. And, were it not for the two continents we now call North and South America, Columbus *would* have reached India and China.

Back in 1492, the only sea route to India and China was south from Europe and then east, around the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. There was no Suez Canal that made it possible to sail through the Mediterranean and into the Red Sea and out to the Indian Ocean. Since voyages around the Cape of Good Hope were long and dangerous, Columbus wanted to find an easier way to the East.

Once it was learned that the New World contained gold, many people satisfied themselves with plundering the gold. Not so the sea explorers, however, who still wanted to reach India and China by sailing west. The Panama Canal did not exist, and to sail around Cape Horn at the tip of South America was even longer and more dangerous than sailing around Africa. So the explorers tried to find what they called the Northwest Passage through the New World. First they sailed up the Hudson River. But that did not lead to the Pacific Ocean. Then they tried the St. Lawrence River, but that did not lead to the Pacific, either. After years of trying, the explorers decided that the Passage lay through the islands north of Canada's mainland.

Between 1576 and 1616, explorers such as Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, and Baffin searched the area north of Canada, looking for the passage they were convinced must be there. They never found it, though, and after more than a century of looking, explorers gave up, concluding that there was no Northwest Passage. The idea of finding a Northwest Passage to India and China was abandoned.

But the question remained, was there a Northwest Passage? Could a ship reach the Pacific by sailing the waters north of Canada? The answer was *yes*. Such a passage was discovered in 1853 by Sir Robert McClure, who was not able to sail through it because it was icebound. In 1906, however, Roald Amundsen managed to sail through it; for a few days or weeks each year, the passage is navigable, given the right conditions.

The Northwest Passage; it is and it is not there.



1. Circle the three-word phrase in the first paragraph that introduces the reason Columbus was sailing west.
2. Re-read the last sentence in the first paragraph. Which of these words means the same as "were it not for":
 (a) because of, (b) except for, (c) unless, (d) although.
3. Circle the word in the second paragraph that introduces the reason for Columbus's wanting to find an easier way to the East.
4. Circle the word in the first sentence of the third paragraph that is a clue that a reason or condition will follow.
5. "So the explorers tried to find what they called the Northwest Passage through the New World." In this sentence, "so" means the same as:
 (a) therefore, (b) but, (c) and, (d) if.
6. Circle the word in the fifth paragraph that introduces the reason that McClure could not sail through the passage.
7. Why did early explorers seek the Northwest Passage? _____

8. Why couldn't they find it? _____
9. In what way does the Northwest Passage exist? _____

10. In what way does it not exist? _____
