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CELEBRATE BASIC READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Basic does not mean boring! There certainly is nothing dull about . . .

- . . . reading about skeletons in closets, slimy green stuff, or viewpoints of a headache
- . . . figuring out why you can't blow your nose in public in one U.S. town
- . . . seeing what you can find out from tombstones
- . . . deciding what ants and grasshoppers can teach you about life
- . . . untangling mixed-up words, sentences, stories, stereotypes, and ideas
- . . . learning how to cure acne or how to ride a 30-foot wave
- . . . tracking down clues for puzzles and mysteries
- . . . finding out humorous stuff you never knew about famous historical characters

The idea of celebrating the basics is just what it sounds like—enjoying and improving the basic skills of reading, understanding, and using words and language. The pages that follow are full of exercises for students that will help to review and strengthen specific, basic skills in the content area of language arts. This is not just another ordinary 'fill-in-the-blanks' way to learn. The high-interest exercises will put students to work focusing on and applying the most important skills of reading comprehension while enjoying fun and challenging adventures with pieces of literature.

The pages in this book can be used in many ways:

- for individual students to sharpen or practise a skill
- with a small group needing to relearn or strengthen a skill
- as an instructional tool for teaching a skill to any size group
- by students working on their own
- by students working under the direction of a teacher or parent

Each page may be used to introduce a new skill, to reinforce a skill, or even to assess a student's performance of a skill.

As students take on the challenges of these adventures with words, they will grow in their mastery of language skills and will enjoy learning to the fullest. And as you watch them check off the basic reading comprehension skills they've strengthened, you can celebrate with them!

A BELLY LAUGH BALLAD

A ballad is a poem or rhyme that tells a short story and is meant to be sung. Many ballads are love stories or tragic stories of death and betrayal. A few are humourous. Here is a very funny English ballad, written on a universal theme. Some of the words have been paraphrased from Old English. You will be able to figure out the others!

GET UP AND BAR THE DOOR

It fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings to make,
She'd boiled them in the pan.

The wind so cold blew south and north.
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife
"Get up and bar the door."

"My hand is in my housework,
Goodman, you may see
And it will not be barred for a hundred years
If it has to be barred by me!"

So they made a pact between them two,
They made it firm and sure.
That whoever was the first to speak
Should rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o'clock at night,
They could neither see house nor hall
Nor coal nor candlelight.

They called, "Is this a rich man's house,
Or do you say it's poor?"
But ne'er a word would one of them speak
For barring of the door.

And first they ate the white puddings
And then they ate the black:
Tho the goodwife thought much to herself,
Yet ne'er a word she spake.

Then said one robber to another
"Here, man, take ye my knife;
Do ye take off the old man's beard
And I'll kiss the goodwife."

"But there's no water in the house,
And what shall we do then?"
"We'll use the pudding water
That boils in the pan!"

Up then started our goodman.
An angry man was he.
"Will ye kiss my wife before my eyes
And scald me with pudding bree?"

Then up and started our goodwife,
Did three skips on the floor;
"Goodman, you've spoken the foremost word;
Get up and bar the door!"

1. What is the theme of this ballad?

2. What serious point or moral is made by this funny story?

3. Use the back of the page to write a brief summary of the story in this ballad.

Name _____