

NTI

6th
grade
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Name: _____

Nonfiction Reading Test

The Pony Express

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.



- #1 In this age of texts and tweets, it is easy to send messages. You just press a few buttons, and boom! Your message is sent. The person to whom you sent it will get it in just a few seconds. Distance is no longer an issue. But things weren't always so easy.
- #2 In 1848 gold was found in California. Thousands of people rushed there to get some. Many people liked living there and decided to stay. But there wasn't a whole lot between California and Missouri, where the nearest trains ran. The train line to California wasn't finished until 1869. It took a long time to ride a horse to Missouri.
- #3 Imagine that it is the year 1860. You have moved to California to open a shop. Most of your family stayed back East. Your shop is doing well and now you want to your family to join you. How do you get news to them? There's no phone, no train, and you can't leave your shop for too long. What do you do? Well, you could use the Pony Express.
- #4 In 1860 and 1861, the Pony Express was the fastest way to get news to and from the West. The trail that they rode was around 2000 miles long. It took most people weeks or months to ride that far. The Pony Express could make the trip in just ten days. Those speeds were unheard of at the time. So how did they do it? Well, they had a good system.
- #5 The Pony Express had 184 stations along the trail. The stations were around ten miles apart. This is about how far a horse could run at a gallop before tiring. The rider would switch to a new horse at each station. He would only take his mail pouch with him. Every 75-100 miles, the rider would get to a home station. At each home station, riders would rest. Before resting, he would give his mail pouch to a new rider. The mail never stopped moving, even while the horses and riders rested.
- #6 It was tough to ride for the Pony Express. Each rider had to weigh less than 125 pounds. Speed was the key. Most of the riders were teenage boys. They rode at a fast pace for up to 100 miles a day. If there were an emergency, one might have to ride 200 miles in a day. The ride could be rough and dangerous. Attacks by Native Americans were common. But in its time running, the Pony Express only lost one mail pouch.
- #7 The Pony Express filled an important role for a time, but it did not last. The Civil War started in April of 1861. This was bad news for the owners. The worst for them was yet to come. On October 24th, 1861, the first telegraph line to California was finished. This linked them to the rest of the country. People could send messages in an instant. Two days later the Pony Express closed. But the lore of the brave riders lives on even today.

Day 1 read paragraphs
1-4 (Summarize with 5-7
sentences)

*Write on notebook paper

Day 2 read paragraphs 5-7
(Summarize with 5-7 sentences)

*Write on notebook paper

- Day 3 Write answer on notebook paper
- Which happened first?
 - Settlers rushed to California to find gold.
 - The Pony Express was started.
 - The train line to California was finished.
 - The first telegraph line to California was finished.
 - Which best explains why Pony Express riders had to weigh less than 125 pounds?
 - Heavier men were more expensive.
 - Horses were scared of heavier men.
 - Heavier men scared customers.
 - Horses could move quicker with lighter men.
 - How fast could the Pony Express take a letter from California to Missouri?
 - 24 hours
 - ten days
 - twenty days
 - one month
 - Why were the Pony Express stations about ten miles apart?
 - This was about as far as a man could walk in a single day.
 - This was as far as a man could ride on a horse in a day.
 - This was so the riders wouldn't get so lonely at night.
 - This was as far as a horse could run without getting tired.
 - Which was probably **not** a requirement to be a rider for the Pony Express?
 - You had to be light.
 - You had to be an expert horse rider.
 - You had to be able to read and write.
 - You had to be brave in the face of danger.
 - Which best describes that main idea of the fifth paragraph?
 - It is about how many Pony Express stations there were.
 - It is about how the Pony Express carried mail so quickly.
 - It is about how the Pony Express riders slept in the stations.
 - It is about how far the Pony Express riders would go in a day.
 - Which of these ended the Pony Express?
 - The telegraph
 - The Civil War
 - Wars with Native Americans
 - The train line
 - About how far did Pony Express riders travel on a usual day?
 - 10 miles
 - 200 miles
 - 100 miles
 - 2000 miles
 - How many mail pouches did the Pony Express lose?
 - The Pony Express never lost a mail pouch.
 - One
 - Two
 - Too many to keep track
 - Which title best describes the author's purpose in writing this?
 - Out of Touch: Why Phones are Faster Than Horses*
 - The Pony Express: Stories of Their Bravery in Battle*
 - Back in Touch: Why We Should Use Horses to Deliver the Mail*
 - The Pony Express: About the 1860's Fastest Mail Service*

Day 4 (6-10) Write answer on notebook paper

1. How was the Pony Express able to move letters across the country so quickly? Refer to the text in your answer.

Write in notebook
Day 5 Paper

2. How did the California Gold Rush help to create a need for the Pony Express? Use the text to support your response.

Write in notebook
Day 6

3. Why was the Pony Express no longer needed? Refer to the text in your answer.

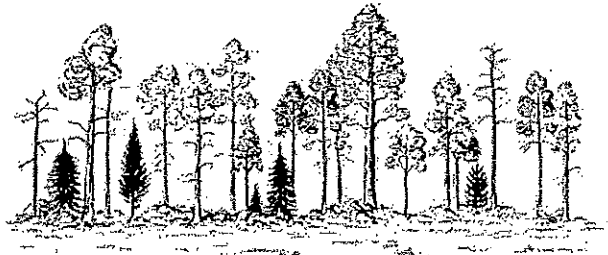
Write in notebook
Day 7

Nonfiction Reading Test

Redwoods and Arms Races

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

1 Redwoods are the tallest trees in the world. They grow to be as high as 380 feet. Compare that to an American football field, which is 300 feet long. A redwood would impress you if you stood near one. But why do they grow so tall?



2 It's hard to see from the ground, but the redwoods are competing. They are fighting with each other to get the most sunlight. The trees that get the most sunlight grow taller. Trees that get stuck under other trees do not get as much light. They lose the opportunity to grow taller. So redwoods must grow taller to compete or they will get trapped on the bottom.

3 Growing so tall is risky. The wind is more threatening to a tall tree. It is also hard to grow so much. Redwoods use all their energy to grow tall. The trees might be better off if they didn't have to grow so tall to survive. Their lives would be safer and easier. But there is no way for them to coordinate. They cannot agree to stop growing as tall as possible. So they compete their whole lives.

4 People face similar challenges. For example, nations spend a lot of money to protect themselves from other nations. The US spends more than half its budget on defense. Most other nations spend 10-30% of theirs on arms and armies. That's a lot of money.

5 We could spend that money on schools, roads, and parks. We could spend it on feeding hungry people or helping the environment. We could spend it on advancing art, philosophy, or science. So why don't we?

6 The problem is that if a nation has no military, then they face the risk of invasion. A nation with a mighty army may take their resources and destroy them on a whim.

7 Like the redwoods, which grow taller to their own *detriment*, we are locked in a harmful race. Most people agree that world peace is better than an arms race. In a peaceful world, we could use all our resources to make our lives better.

8 That sounds nice, but what if one nation broke the agreement? What if they built an army in secret? What if they used their secret army to destroy us? Can we afford to take that risk? Most nations decide that they cannot. Rather, they choose to spend a lot of money on defense programs.

Day 8 Read paragraphs (1-8) Write a (5-7)

Name: _____

Redwoods and Arms Races (Questions)

1. Why does the author believe that redwoods grow so tall?
 - a. They are in a life or death fight for sunlight.
 - b. They want more oxygen, which is higher in the atmosphere.
 - c. They want more rain, so they race toward the clouds.
 - d. They want more exposure to wind, so they grow high.

2. Which best describes the author's purpose in the FIFTH paragraph?
 - a. To propose ways that we could fix the redwoods and save the forests
 - b. To make a wish list of what he would do if he were the president
 - c. To explain how our government is corrupt and evil
 - d. To list how tax money could be better spent than on defense

3. Why does the author think that it'd be better for redwoods if they were shorter?
 - a. Growing wider helps the tree to get more sun.
 - b. Growing tall is dangerous and hard.
 - c. Growing tall is boring and time-consuming.
 - d. Growing wider helps the tree get more wind.

4. What risk do redwoods take if they stop growing taller?
 - a. They will have less access to wind and water.
 - b. The wind is more likely to knock them over.
 - c. They are more likely to be harmed in a war.
 - d. Other trees will take their sunlight.

5. With which statement would the author most likely AGREE?
 - a. Spending tax money on defense is wasteful and we should NOT do it.
 - b. Spending tax money on defense is the best thing we can do as a species.
 - c. Spending tax money on defense is wasteful but we should still do it.
 - d. Spending tax money on defense is good because missiles help people.

Day 9 (1-5) Write answers on
notebook paper

6. Which best defines the word *detriment* as used in paragraph 7? Use the context clues.
- a. To make things worse
 - b. To make things better
 - c. To keep things about the same
 - d. To come to an agreement
7. According to the text, a nation that doesn't spend on defense faces which risk?
- a. They will not be able to control their citizens.
 - b. They will not be able to invade other lands.
 - c. Another nation may invade and destroy them.
 - d. Another nation may want to trade with them.
8. According to the text, which statement is TRUE?
- a. Most nations spend around a quarter of their budgets on defense.
 - b. Most nations spend more than half of their budgets on defense.
 - c. Most nations spend almost none of their budgets on defense.
 - d. Most nations spend all of their budgets on defense.
9. With which statement would the author most likely DISAGREE?
- a. Redwoods use a lot of energy to grow so tall.
 - b. There are no downsides to maintaining a strong army.
 - c. Growing too tall is dangerous for a tree.
 - d. Defense budgets use a lot of resources.
10. Which statement best expresses the MAIN IDEA of this text?
- a. SOME competitions are harmful to ALL competitors.
 - b. ALL competitions are good for ALL competitors.
 - c. NO competitions are good for ANY competitors.
 - d. NO competitions are harmful to ANY competitors.

Day 10 Write answers on notebook
Paper.