



GRADE

8

PSSA Finish Line

Reading plus Writing

**Sample
Lesson**

with Assessment Anchors

Continental Press

Contents

Introduction to PSSA Finish Line Reading Grade 8	4
Unit 1: Vocabulary	5
Lesson 1 Meaning of Vocabulary	6
Lesson 2 Word Recognition Skills	15
Unit 2: Comprehension and Reading Skills	23
Lesson 3 Inferences, Conclusions, and Generalizations	24
Lesson 4 Main Idea and Details	39
Lesson 5 Summarizing	56
Lesson 6 Genre	71
Unit 3: Interpreting and Analyzing Text	79
Lesson 7 Character, Setting, Plot, and Theme	80
Lesson 8 Making Connections	99
Lesson 9 Figurative Language	111
Lesson 10 Point of View	120
Lesson 11 Fact and Opinion	128
Lesson 12 Essential and Nonessential Information	136
Lesson 13 Organizing Text	144
Unit 4: Writing	163
Lesson 14 Quality of Writing	164
Lesson 15 Writing Informational Pieces	172
Lesson 16 Writing Persuasive Pieces	177

Inferences, Conclusions, and Generalizations

Anchors R8.A.1.3, R8.A.2.3

A writer does not state every fact plainly. Writers assume you can figure out some details based on what you know and what you are reading. This is called **making inferences**.



The passage says:

To get technical support on the phone, you have to call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

You know:

Today is Saturday.

You can infer:

You can't get help over the phone if you call today.

Writers may also give you information that you can use to determine other facts. When you do that, you are **drawing conclusions**, or **making generalizations**.

Mathilde Klemmer grew up a country girl. In the 1840s, this was possible even in New York City. Manhattan Island was developed only as far north as 39th Street. Hundreds of people lived in rural villages on land that today is covered by Central Park.

The passage says:

- Mathilde Klemmer grew up a country girl.
- In the 1840s, this was possible in New York City.
- Hundreds of people lived in rural villages on Manhattan Island.

You can conclude:

Mathilde Klemmer grew up in the 1840s in a rural area of Manhattan.

Guided Practice

Read the passage "Prehistoric Impressions." Then answer the questions that follow.

Prehistoric Impressions

by Muriel Anderson

When Dr. Sheldon Johnson started digging up his property with a backhoe, he only meant to fill some holes. Instead, he turned up what some scientists call one of the best collections of dinosaur footprints ever found.

Johnson, a retired eye doctor, and his wife, LaVerna, a former teacher, own 130 acres near St. George, Utah. During the early Jurassic period 200 million years ago, their land was part of a muddy, shallow lake. Dinosaurs such as *Eubrontes*, a 26-foot plant eater, and *Dilophosaurus*, a 20-foot meat eater, foraged and hunted along its shores. Their feet would sometimes sink into the muddy lake bottom, leaving deep impressions. These lasted long enough to fill with sand, forming a sort of concrete. Over the eons the lake dried up, and its bed was buried under mud, clay, and rock. When Johnson dug it up in February 2000, the raised impressions were found at the bottom of 10-foot x 3-foot blocks of stone.



Dinosaur footprint found on the Johnsons' property.

The high plains and desert areas of western North America are some of the world's richest areas for dinosaur fossils. But this does not mean you're likely to find one by digging in the ground with a backhoe. And footprints are the rarest of all dinosaur fossils, far less common than bones or even eggs. When Johnson turned up the three-toed impressions, he immediately understood how important they were. "I didn't sleep that night," he later said.

Word quickly spread. Dinosaur fans began to arrive from around the world. In the first two weeks, more than 12,000 people showed up. Johnson and his wife guarded the site during the day until paleontologists could inspect the find. LaVerna became an expert on dinosaurs and provided information and a guest book for the many visitors.

The scientists were as surprised as the public. Some of the prints were so detailed that scales were visible between the claws. One set of prints seemed to be from a previously unknown species of meat eater. A scientific team was quickly assembled to excavate the site and analyze the findings.

The scientific community praised the Johnsons' attitude toward their discovery. Other people who own land where dinosaur fossils have been found have tried to profit from their find. But the Johnsons have not even charged admission to their uninvited guests and have donated 20 acres to the city of St. George. The U.S. Congress recently released funds to build a science and visitor center on the site.

Based on the passage, you can conclude that footprints would **not** have been formed if

- A the area had not been a rocky desert.
- B Johnson had been careless with his backhoe.
- C the area had not been a shallow, muddy lake.
- D dinosaurs had not lived such a long time ago.

Paragraph 2 of the passage explains that the dinosaur footprints were left on a muddy lake bottom. If the surface had not been muddy, the footprints probably would not have been visible. Choice C is the correct answer.

The passage suggests that if you dug in the ground in the high plains or desert areas of the western United States, you would be **most likely** to find

- A dinosaur eggs.
- B dinosaur bones.
- C dinosaur fossils.
- D dinosaur footprints.

Paragraph 3 of the passage explains that the high plains and desert areas of western North America are some of the richest areas for dinosaur fossils. Dinosaur eggs, bones, and footprints, on the other hand, are extremely rare discoveries. Choice C is the correct answer.

Based on the passage, you can conclude that paleontologists analyzing dinosaur footprints may discover

- A about how long ago the footprints were formed.
- B evidence about what caused the dinosaurs to become extinct.
- C how far dinosaurs like *Dilophosaurus* ranged in their hunt for food.
- D whether some of the footprints came from a previously unknown species.

In paragraph 5, the author explains that a set of prints found on Dr. Johnson's property seemed to belong to a previously unknown species of meat eater. Choice D is the correct answer.

Read the passage "A Book That Changed History." Then answer the open-ended question.

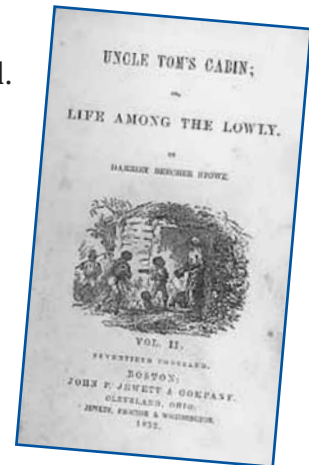
A Book That Changed History

by Jack Lewis

My father kept a bookstore in Cincinnati, Ohio. The store was on Walnut Street, near the river, so you could hear the steamboats' whistles as they rounded the point upstream from town. I would go to the boat landing with my father and help him load the wagon when his orders came in from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. The books were heavy, and we had to walk beside the horses to coax them up the steep hill.

That year the book everyone wanted to read was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Fights sometimes broke out as people elbowed their way through the crowd to purchase the few precious copies. But the fighting was really over the ideas in the book. Many of our customers were from Kentucky, which was south across the river and a slave state.

That was the year I turned 13, the year everything changed. Eventually, the entire country would be fighting over the ideas in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—and so would I.



Read the passage "Time After Time." Then answer the questions that follow.

Time After Time

by Morton Bass

Maggie sat up in bed. Was someone in her room? A shadowy figure scurried out the door. Was she dreaming? She leaped out of bed. There was a piece of paper taped to her door. She ignored it and pursued the shadowy figure. It was Saturday, so the rest of her family would be sleeping until 8:00. The big grandfather clock at the far end of the corridor showed 7:00. Her great-grandparents had bought the clock their first year in America.

But wait a minute, there was something wrong with the clock. It wasn't sitting flush up against the wall. In the dim hallway, Maggie saw the clock move! It moved back toward the wall! Someone was behind it! She saw a hand on each side pulling the clock backward. There was a ring on the finger of one hand. It looked just like her own ring, the one she had inherited from her great-grandmother. Suddenly, there was a mysterious flash of light! "Are you OK, Maggie?" her dad asked, turning on the light. The clock was back in place.

"I guess so," she replied. She wanted to tell her dad what she had seen, but how could she when she wasn't even sure herself? She walked back to her own room as her dad went back to his. Then she remembered the paper taped to her door. It was still there.

On it, a note in familiar script read, "Take a notebook, a pen, tape, and the fifty-dollar bill when you leave the house." The handwriting was her own! Could she have written this note to herself and forgotten about it? Unlikely, but anything was possible. Maggie made sure she had everything when she left the house. There was no question about which fifty-dollar bill to take. It, too, was a memento from her great-grandparents.

Maggie walked down Front Street as she often did early on Saturday mornings. As she passed Miller's Antiques, something caught her eye—a grandfather clock identical to the one at home. Well, that wasn't so odd. They were rare, but not unique. Maggie entered the store. No one was around as she examined the clock closely. When



she walked behind it, she noticed the back panel was off. Suddenly, she felt a force pulling her into the clock itself! She couldn't resist. Then she passed out for what seemed like a second.

When she came to and pulled herself out of the clock, everything was strangely different. She looked out the store window expecting to see cars and trucks on the familiar street. Instead, she saw horses and wagons on a dirt road! The store was no longer empty. A young man and woman were talking to the owner. They all wore strange, old-fashioned clothes. The owner was saying, "Yes, Mr. Francis, she's a beauty, but the price is \$50, and I can't extend credit. Think it over." The young man reached in and out of his pockets as though he hoped to find the money he needed there.

Then everything fell into place for Maggie. The young man and woman were her great-grandparents—when they were young! She worked her way silently around the furniture and slipped the fifty-dollar bill into the man's pocket, unnoticed. Then she sneaked back to the clock, removed the rear panel, and stepped inside. When she opened the panel again a moment (or so it seemed) later, she was in the hallway of her home as it looks in modern times. She went to her own room where a young girl was sleeping. She wrote a note, taped it to the door, and left the room just as the girl in the bed began to stir.

She heard the girl awaken and chase after her. Just in time she reached the old clock and pulled it away from the wall so that she could get back inside and avoid an encounter—with herself.

Why did Maggie slip the money into the young man's pocket?

- A** to get rid of it
- B** to confuse him
- C** so he could buy the clock
- D** because she owed it to him

When Maggie came out of the clock to a strangely different store, she saw her young great-grandparents inquiring about the price of the clock. The clock cost \$50, and Maggie's great-grandparents could not afford it. So she slipped the money into her great-grandfather's pocket to help him to buy the clock. Choice C is the correct answer.

Read the passage “The Great Chili Cookoff.” Then answer the questions that follow.

The Great Chili Cookoff

by Alec Finsterbush

The aroma strikes you first. It’s enough to make your mouth water, and your eyes, too. It’s the smell of meat simmering in 20 spicy sauces. Suddenly you’re hungry. Very hungry. Twenty cooks stand expectantly behind 20 portable stoves. They stir sweet-smelling pots filled with onions, spices, tomatoes, Jalapeños or other hot chili peppers. But there are no beans, macaroni, or other such fillers. This is Texas, not New York. We’re at the Super Bowl of chili cookoffs: the 2005 Terlingua International Chili Championship.

Terlingua, Texas, is an old desert mining town not far from the Mexican border. By 1967, the mines had played out, and Terlingua was practically a ghost town. That was when a writer named H. Allen Smith published an article in the *New York Times*. Under the title “Nobody Knows More About Chili than I Do,” he included his recipe for chili with beans. A Texas writer named Wick Fowler responded: “If you think chili has beans, you don’t know beans about chili.” A contest was arranged in Terlingua between the two writer-cooks. The event was declared a tie. But the tradition of the chili cookoff had been born, and Terlingua was reborn as the Chili Capital of the World.

The Terlingua International Chili Championship (TICC) is held every year on the first Saturday in November. Entrants must qualify by earning points in state and regional chili cookoffs sanctioned by the Chili Appreciation Society International (CASI). All CASI events must follow a set of guidelines spelled out in a 33-page rule book. All chili must be made “from scratch,” at the site of the contest, starting with raw meat. No marinating is allowed. Commercial chili powder is permitted, but not packaged mixtures that contain pre-measured spices. Each cook must provide one paper cup of his chili for the judges to taste. If a contestant refuses to taste his or her own chili at the judge’s request, that contestant will be disqualified. Anyone shooting off guns or firecrackers will be asked to leave. The same goes for anyone whose recipe uses beans, grains, pasta, “or other similar ingredients.”

On cookoff day, there are two rounds of competition. Dozens of entrants compete in the first round, but only a chosen few make it to the afternoon final. The tasting is “blind”: Each contestant is assigned a number written on a paper cup so that the judges don’t know whose recipe they’re tasting. Judging is based on five criteria: aroma, consistency, red color, taste, and aftertaste.

In the late afternoon, following an interval for entertainment and games, the judges announce the winners, from tenth place to first. This year’s champion is Margaret Nadeau of Boerne, Texas. Past winners have included men and women from as far away as Illinois,

California, and Virginia. But most years, the championship trophy stays right in Texas. It resembles a globe, signifying the “international” character of the event. But it’s shaped like a chili pepper.

Based on the passage, what can you conclude about the Terlingua International Chili Championship?

- A It forbids advance preparation.
- B It allows any kind of chili recipe.
- C It allows participants from Texas only.
- D It forbids the use of commercial spices.

Choice B is incorrect because many ingredients that are commonly used for chili are forbidden. Choice C is incorrect because the very name of the competition indicates that participants can come from all over the world. Choice D is also incorrect because paragraph 3 says that commercial chili powder is allowed in the competition. Paragraph 3 explains how the rules of the competition state that chili must be made from scratch, which means that it cannot be cooked in advance. Choice A is the correct answer.

How does the International Chili Championship **most likely** help the city of Terlingua?

- A It finances the local mines.
- B It draws tourists throughout the year.
- C It improves the health of townspeople.
- D It draws attention to a former ghost town.

Choice A is incorrect because the author says that the mines played out. Choice B is incorrect because the championship takes place on the first Saturday in November, in the fall. Choice C is also incorrect because there is no mention of the local diet. The competition helps Terlingua because it brings attention to a place that was previously a ghost town. Choice D is the correct answer.

Test Yourself

Read the passage "Colorblindness." Then do Numbers 1 through 4.

Colorblindness

by John Roy Bonoir

Colorblindness is the inability to distinguish between colors. It affects about 8% of all men and 0.5% of women. Most people with defective color vision have trouble distinguishing between red and green. They may not be able to see different shades of these colors. Or they may see both of them as a shade of yellow. Complete colorblindness, in which people see all colors as black, white, or gray, is much rarer.

Colorblindness is usually inherited and has nothing to do with sharpness of vision. It is carried by a gene transmitted through the mother. Male children inherit the gene from their mother. Female children are not usually affected, but they pass the gene on to their own children. Acquired colorblindness may be caused by certain eye diseases. Doctors test for colorblindness by having a patient pick out patterns in colored dots or match pieces of various colors.

- 1 According to the passage, who would **most likely** be colorblind?
 - A a man whose father is colorblind
 - B a man who must wear thick glasses
 - C a man whose mother's brothers are colorblind
 - D a woman whose father and grandfather are colorblind
- 2 What might a colorblind person have trouble doing?
 - A driving a car
 - B playing soccer
 - C playing the piano
 - D reading a newspaper
- 3 The passage suggests that
 - A color blindness can be cured.
 - B any form of color blindness is rare.
 - C more women are colorblind than men.
 - D color blindness occurs every other generation.

Read the passage "Freedom of the Press." Then do Numbers 1 through 4.

Freedom of the Press

by Anna Cragg

We were cutting the leaflets and congratulating ourselves when someone opened the door at the top of the stairs. Joel grabbed the mouse and clicked the display off the screen. A pair of girl's legs in sneakers and shorts appeared on the stairs, followed by the rest of Joel's sister Eva.

Joel relaxed. "Oh. Hi, Eva," he said brightly.

"Hi yourself. What are you doing on the computer?"

"Oh, nothing," Joel smirked, and I, cleverly, said "Homework."

"Yeah, right. Tomorrow's the first day of school. You'd better not be surfing the 'Net when Mom's not home." She snatched one of the leaflets out of my hand. "'For the *real* story about Lucretia Mott Middle School, check out www.mottsoffun.com...' What is this?"

"Just a project Brendan and I have been working on this summer," Joel said. "Kind of a guide for incoming sixth graders about what Mott is *really* like."

Eva looked at the computer. Joel made a show of lunging for the mouse as if to keep it out of her hand, but she grabbed it first. Joel and I looked at each other, grinning, as Eva clicked, then clicked again.

"You can't publish this!" she exclaimed. "'Mr. Diaz's science class is like soda pop without the fizz, like pizza without the sauce'—this is slanderous!"

"You put in three years at Mott," Joel said. "Tell me it isn't true."

"Truth isn't the issue," Eva said, laughing in spite of herself. Then she exploded, sputtering. I couldn't see the screen from where I was sitting, but I knew that old Diaz's wig had just lifted off the top of his head. She turned accusingly to me. "Is this your idea, Brendan Platt?"

"It's a collaboration," I said. "Joel wrote the text, and I did the graphics."

"But it was your idea, wasn't it? This has Platt Productions written all over it. Where did you learn to do computer graphics like this?"

"Tech camp at Penn State," I said. "Remember I got awarded that scholarship last spring?"



“Yeah, well, it might be the last one they ever give a Mott student...” Eva laughed again. “If you want an A from Ms. Handler, make a point of noticing the pictures of her grandchildren on her desk and telling her how cute they are’—how do you think you’re going to get away with this?”

“It’s just a spoof,” I said. “Like *MAD* magazine.”

“Freedom of the press,” Joel said.

Eva turned away from the computer. “I can’t look any more,” she said. “This isn’t freedom of the press. This isn’t even shouting ‘fire!’ in a crowded theater. This is more like *setting* the theater on fire.”

“Why?” Joel said. “You think we’ll get in trouble for this?”

“Not the kind of trouble you’re thinking about,” Eva said. “Not being-sent-to-the-principal’s-office kind of trouble.... Oh, my goodness!” she exclaimed, unable to keep her eyes off our work of art.

- 1 Which of these **best** describes Joel’s feelings in this passage?
 - A He is proud of what he and Brendan have done and wants Eva to see it.
 - B He is worried that Eva will tell their parents what he and Brendan have done.
 - C He is vain about what he has done and does not want to share credit with Brendan.
 - D He is uneasy about posting his Web site and really hopes Eva will talk him out of it.

- 2 Eva would **probably** agree with which of these statements?
 - A Joel and Brendan are too clever for their own good.
 - B There should be a Web site like this about every school.
 - C Brendan is a bad kid who will get his friend in trouble.
 - D Joel and Brendan will be caught telling lies once too often.

- 3 What would be the lesson that the boys will **probably** learn in the end?
 - A People should give more thought to the feelings of others.
 - B People do not really care that much about truth and honesty.
 - C If you are smart and funny, you can get away with anything.
 - D A mistake made when you are young can stick with you forever.

