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## Visual Literacy

RI.8.7, RL.8.7, RST.8.7

● Lexile: 1060L

● History/Social Studies

Student Book  
Page 161

## Test Yourself

Read the passage. Then answer the questions.

## Across the Top of the World

by Clarice Campbell

Global warming may be the cause of a lot of problems over the next century, but in one respect it is fulfilling a 500-year-old dream. It is turning the once-mythical Northwest Passage into a fact.

The “Northwest Passage” is a sea route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the North American Arctic. Ever since geographers realized the land Columbus had discovered was not Asia but a continent unknown to Europeans, sailors had been seeking a way around it. They could risk their lives by going around stormy Cape Horn or threading the slightly less risky Strait of Magellan. The Spanish guarded that route jealously in the 1500s. If you were a trader from another nation, you needed to find another way or be prepared to fight.

That’s why explorers sought a northern sea route to Asia. There had to be a “northwest passage” that would take them to the Pacific without going the long way around. There “had to be,” only because traders wanted there to be. Arctic ice extended so far south, even in summer, that no one was able to prove that a Northwest Passage existed. The English explorer Martin Frobisher tried to find it in 1576, but he got no farther than the southern end of Baffin Island. A decade later, the English captain John Davis made three attempts to find the passage. His voyages made a profit through fur trading and fishing, but when he tried to sail north around Baffin Island he found the sea filled with huge icebergs and covered by fog. By late August it was winter in those latitudes, and Davis returned to England.

At least he and his men got home safely. Others who sought the passage were not so fortunate. The most famous was Sir John Franklin and his ill-fated expedition of 1845–1848. He made it through the strait north of Baffin Island, but his ships became frozen in the ice near King William Island, and he and all his men were lost. Artifacts from the Franklin expedition are still turning up in the Canadian Arctic.

Robert McClure finally proved that there was a Northwest Passage in 1854. However, he had to make his way in from the west by dogsled. The passage was finally navigated from Atlantic to Pacific in 1906, by the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. It was a historic feat, but a hollow one. The voyage had taken three years. The variation each year in whether the passage was blocked by ice made the route impractical. And just a few years later the Panama Canal opened, making the dangerous passage irrelevant.

strait  
narrow body of  
water between  
two land masses



## Skill Strategy

Inferences and Conclusions—see pages 13–14 of the teacher’s edition

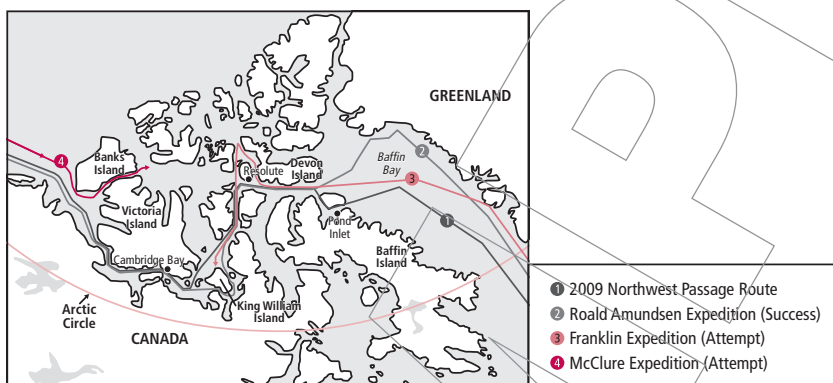
## Vocabulary

impractical, irrelevant, latitudes, navigated, strait, variation

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Until 2009, that year, shrinkage of the Arctic ice because of global warming had left the Northwest Passage navigable by large cargo ships during the summer months. Now a new question has arisen. Is the passage part of Canada, as the Canadians claim? Or, is it an international strait, as other nations would have it? Neither side hopes it will take as long to resolve the issue as it did to open the passage.

 **navigable**  
able for ships to travel through



- 1 Which fact in the article is emphasized by the illustration on page 161? Analyze how the illustration gives information that is not necessarily evident in the text.

**Searching for the Northwest Passage was extremely dangerous, as ships would get stuck in ice. The illustration shows what that actually means. It wasn't like a car being stuck on an icy street. Water would freeze around the ship, tilting it and crushing it.**

**RH.8.7**

- 2 Why was Baffin Island a barrier to explorers searching for the Northwest Passage? Analyze how the map on page 162 helps you answer the question.

**Baffin Island is a large island stretching from southeast to northwest. Explorers coming from Europe would have to pick their way up its eastern side before they could turn west. That took them so far north that they ran into ice. RH.8.7**

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

### ● Listening/Speaking

Using the Internet, have students find an animated video sequence that demonstrates how the Arctic pack ice has been shrinking in recent decades. Have students discuss who will benefit from this change and who will be harmed by it.

### ● ELLs

Have students think about some problems that modern technology has solved. Invite students to share their problems and solutions with the class.

## Student Book Page 163

- 3 Ships going through the strait north of Baffin Island passed between it and \_\_\_\_.

A Greenland  
B Banks Island  
C Devon Island  
D King William Island

**RH.8.7**

- 4 The article mentions a controversy between Canada and other nations over whether the Northwest Passage is in Canadian or international waters. What conclusions can you draw about this dispute from looking at the map?

From the map, it looks like the Canadians have a case. Except at its far eastern and western ends, the entire route goes between islands that are part of Canada. **RH.8.7**

- 5 Evaluate how this topic might be better presented and easier to understand in a different medium.

A video presentation showing the actual locations would make the problem of navigating the Northwest Passage much clearer and easier to understand. You could see the icebergs and realize how difficult it would be for a ship to maneuver among them. Video animation on a computer screen could also show the routes taken by the various explorers in a dynamic way, and photographs would let you be able to see what the explorers themselves saw. **RI.8.7**