

Nonfiction Reading Comprehension

by Dr. James E. Swalm and Dr. June I. Coultas
with Patricia Braccio and Kathleen Haughey
Edited by Sarah M.W. Espano

Class Pack ISBN: 978-0-7827-2319-9 • Student Book ISBN: 978-0-7827-2318-2
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Queue, Inc. • 80 Hathaway Drive, Stratford, CT 06615
(800) 232-2224 • Fax: (800) 775-2729 • www.qworkbooks.com

About the Authors

Dr. James Swalm has been actively involved in the development of classroom instructional materials for many years. As Director of the New Jersey Right to Read and Bureau of Basic Skills, he participated in the development of statewide tests in reading, writing and mathematics as well as in the writing of various instructional and staff development materials in reading and language arts. Dr. Swalm has authored and co-authored numerous books and professional articles on reading, writing, and assessment, as well as on the use of technology in instruction. He has taught both undergraduate and graduate level courses in reading and curriculum development, and at all levels, K–12. Dr. Swalm has also been a principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent, and has served as an educational consultant to many school districts.

Dr. June I. Coultas is well-known in the field of education and curriculum development. Her many positions include that of teacher, director of curriculum and instruction, college professor, consultant, lecturer, and award-winning grant writer. She is the author and co-author of numerous educational books, as well as of multimedia software programs. Her career includes being New Jersey director of the federal Right-to-Read Program, and manager of the state Bureau of Basic Skills. In addition to memberships in numerous professional associations, she is a past president of the New Jersey Reading Association.

Acknowledgments

Illustrations

Carl W. Swanson, Ph.D.

Maureen B. Coultas

Sarah J. Holden

Table of Contents

To the Student	v
The Special Olympics.....	1
An Environmental Quandary	9
Seeing Codess	18
John Muir	25
Laura’s Quest for Wide-Open Spaces	32
Forgotten Inventors from History	41
Making Your Own Code	51
Manatee	58
Creative Rejections	64
A Presidential Odyssey	71
Save the Manatee?	79
How to Become an Inventor in just 5 Steps	85
Honor Our Earliest People?.....	91
Baffling the Enemy.....	96
What Time Is It?	104
Become a Challenge Olympics Volunteer.....	110
State Challenge Olympics Coming Soon?	116
How Chewing Gum Was Developed.....	122

To the Student

Tips for Answering Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions have a **stem**, which is a question or an incomplete sentence, followed by four answer choices. You should select only one answer choice. Here are some tips to help you correctly answer multiple-choice questions on standardized tests:



- Read each passage carefully.
- Read each question and think about the answer. You may look back to the reading selection as often as necessary.
- Answer all questions on your answer sheet. Do not mark any answers to questions in your test booklet.
- For each question, choose the best answer, and completely fill in the circle in the space provided on your answer sheet.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, skip it and go on. You may return to it later if you have time.
- If you finish the section of the test that you are working on early, you may review your answers in that section only. Don't go on to the next section.

Writer's Checklist for Answering Open-Ended Questions

- Keep the central idea or topic in mind.
- Keep your audience in mind.
- Support your ideas with details, explanations, and examples.
- State your ideas in a clear sequence.
- Include an opening and a closing.
- Use a variety of words and vary your sentence structure.
- State your opinion or conclusion clearly.
- Capitalize, spell, and use punctuation correctly.
- Write neatly.

DIRECTIONS
INTRODUCTION

Read this story/passage and answer the questions that follow. Participating in the Olympics is the dream of many athletes. Yet, intellectually disabled people were not allowed to participate in the traditional Olympics until, in 1968, the first World Games for intellectually disabled people was held.

The Special Olympics

Background

Eunice Kennedy Shriver first conceived of the Special Olympics. The idea originally came from her family's experience with her sister Rosemary, who was intellectually disabled. The Kennedys were well known for their enjoyment of competitive sports, and everyone in the family—including the girls—played. From that experience, Shriver came to believe that intellectually disabled people could benefit from being involved in sports activities.

While director of the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation—a post she was granted in 1957—Shriver started the first day camp for children with intellectual disabilities in 1963. During a five-week session, the campers rode horses, learned to swim, and played various sports. At this time, many believed that intellectually disabled individuals could not do such things. Fortunately, the camp was a great success. As a result of the time they spent there, the children were physically stronger and had increased confidence, lending credibility to Shriver's opinion.

In 1968, the Chicago Parks Department asked the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation to fund a national Olympic event for intellectually disabled children. Shriver readily agreed and worked with them to hold a special Olympic event at Soldier Field in Chicago that summer, marking the beginning of the Special Olympics.

How the Special Olympics Started

The first Special Olympics was held over two days in Chicago beginning on July 20, 1968. Nearly 1,000 intellectually disabled athletes from the United States and Canada



Special Olympics Founder Eunice Kennedy Shriver opens the First International Games in 1968 at Soldier Field, Chicago, Illinois.

**CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING**

Why do you think Eunice Kennedy Shriver was so moved to create the Special Olympics?

attended. The athletes marched into the stadium just as participants in the traditional Olympics do, and their enthusiasm was contagious. The numerous games showed that athletes with intellectual disabilities should and could be involved in athletic events. Many people agreed.

Shriver formed the Special Olympics Incorporated, a nonprofit corporation, during the following year. Local chapters quickly sprang up and now exist in over 150 foreign countries. Today, Special Olympics programs are held in nearly every community and every state in the United States. There are both summer and winter games.

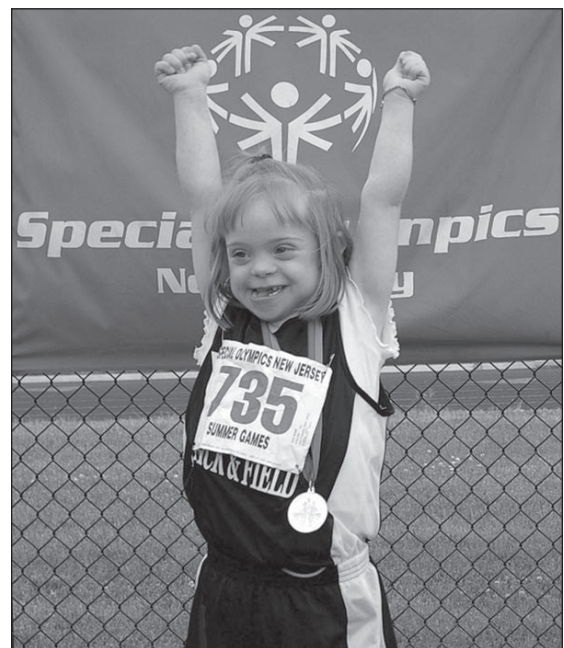
How the Special Olympics Are Run

Special Olympics are held at the local, state, national, and international levels. At each level, a Special Olympics organization runs the actual events. These groups organize the day's events for each Special Olympics. They also assign the hundreds of volunteers who are needed to run the events. The money to fund the Special Olympics is raised primarily by these volunteers. Individuals, businesses, and foundations contribute to these programs. The volunteers organize teams, line up athletes, and time events. One of their most important jobs is that of "hugger," giving a congratulatory hug to each person who crosses the finish line.

In the United States, the games are held every year. In other countries, the games are held either every year or every other year. The World Special Olympics is held every two years. The World Games alternate between winter and summer sports.



One of the most important jobs is that of volunteer "hugger," giving a congratulatory hug to each person who crosses the finish line.



*"Let me win.
But if I cannot win,
let me be brave
in the attempt."*

There are a number of ways in which persons can become Special Olympics athletes. Any intellectually disabled person over eight years of age can be in the games. They can join through their schools or by the recommendation of a local park director. Older athletes may also join through sports groups or on the recommendation of civic or religious groups, or from the places where they work.



ABOVE: Opening ceremonies at the 2003 Special Olympics World Games in Dublin, Ireland. BELOW: Medals from the 2003 Games

The Special Olympics provides year-round training in 30 official sports. The athletes work with a volunteer coach for at least eight weeks before they can compete in the games often, they work year-round. The coaches are given special instruction in understanding and working with athletes with intellectual disabilities.



With people from so many different age groups competing, a wide range of skills and abilities are found among the athletes. To accommodate these differences, athletes are placed in divisions according to age and skill for each sport. Each person only competes against someone of similar ability. Therefore, multiple events in each sport – with first-, second-, and third-place winners – are necessary. Medals are awarded to athletes who place in each event. However, to make everyone feel like a winner, every participant receives a ribbon.

The enthusiasm of the athletes, who are happy both to be involved and to cheer for each other during the competition, is admirable. To them, the thrill is not in winning; it is in being a part of the event, learning new skills, meeting new friends, and going to new places. Taking part in the Special Olympics leaves an everlasting mark on the lives of each of the athletes.

The Motor Activities Program, designed for athletes with serious physical disabilities, is also part of the Special Olympics. Its purpose is to help athletes build basic motor skills. The participants compete in a Training Day that is held on the same day as the Special Olympics. Sometimes these athletes are allowed to enter Special Olympic events.

The Unified Sports Program, another part of the Special Olympics, combines athletes with and without intellectual disabilities on one team. This idea was first introduced in the mid-1980s to provide another level of challenge for higher-ability athletes and to promote equality. The unified team plays other teams in regular leagues. This effort began in the United States and has spread to other countries. The first time Unified Sports teams were part of the Special Olympics competitions was at the 1995 World Games.

Summary

Today, there are more than 150,000 annual Special Olympics games and meets held worldwide. It is the world's largest amateur sports program. There are more than 500,000 volunteers involved in the games each year, and tens of thousands of athletes are involved in the events worldwide. The Special Olympics remains a beacon of hope for the future. ■

1. How did Eunice Kennedy Shriver first get involved with intellectually disabled people?

- A. She was asked to set up a competition by the Chicago Parks Department.
- B. She grew up with a best friend who was an intellectually disabled person.
- C. She grew up with a member of her family who was intellectually disabled.
- D. She attended a five-week day camp to help intellectually disabled children.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the first paragraph.

2. Which of the following best describes athletes in the Special Olympics?

- A. eager
- B. curious
- C. lazy
- D. nervous

HINT: This question asks you to think critically about the way the author described the athletes' attitudes in the passage. How were the athletes described?

3. Where were the Special Olympics first held?

- A. Canada
- B. Chicago
- C. New York
- D. Boston

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, skim the "How the Olympics Started" section of the passage.

4. How many foreign countries participate in the Special Olympics?

- A. 22
- B. 30
- C. more than 150
- D. more than 150,000

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the "How the Special Olympics Started" section.

5. How have the Special Olympics been modeled after the traditional Olympics?

- A. Every athlete receives a ribbon.
- B. Athletes march into the stadium.
- C. The program is run by volunteers.
- D. Local events are held every year.

HINT: This question asks you to make a judgment based on the passage. Reread the beginning of the "How the Special Olympics Started" section.

6. How can an older athlete join the Special Olympics?

- A. with a civic group's recommendation
- B. through the local park director's office
- C. through the school he or she attends
- D. with permission from a previous winner

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the "How the Special Olympics Are Run" section.

7. What is this passage mostly about?

- A. when the Special Olympics holds its national competition
- B. why people decide to volunteer with the Special Olympics
- C. what life is like for an athlete who is in the Special Olympics
- D. how the Special Olympics began and its current operations

HINT: This question asks you to identify the central idea of the passage. Think about what you have read. What do you think the author was trying to say?

8. What is a requirement for athletes who participate in the Special Olympics?

- A. They must have trained with a certified coach for at least eight weeks.
- B. They must have taken a test to show they know the rules of the sport.
- C. They must have learned how to fix and repair equipment for the sport.
- D. They must have joined a Unified Sports Program league in their town.

HINT: This question asks you to identify a requirement to participate in the Special Olympics. Which section of the passage do you think would include that information? Reread that section.

9. What makes the job of "hugger" important?

- A. It shows the athletes that people are proud of their accomplishments.
- B. It gives the athletes a chance to complain when somebody cheats.
- C. It awards the athletes a ribbon or medal for participating in the game.
- D. It explains the rules of the competition to athletes before each race.

HINT: This question asks you to make a judgment based on the passage. Why do you think the Special Olympics asks volunteers specifically to be "huggers"?

10. Who receives ribbons in the Special Olympics?

- A. only the first-, second-, and third-place winners
- B. all of the athletes who compete in any event
- C. only athletes younger than eight
- D. all the athletes who register

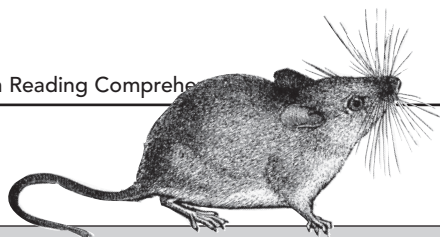
HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the "How the Special Olympics Are Run" section.

Use specific information from the article and any additional insight to support your response.

12. In the opening remarks of the first Special Olympics, Eunice Kennedy Shriver said: "In ancient Rome, the gladiators went into the arena with these words on their lips: 'Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.' "

- What do you think Mrs. Shriver meant when she said this? Explain.

Use specific information from the article and any additional insight to support your response.

**DIRECTIONS
INTRODUCTION**

Read this story/passage and answer the questions that follow. A lot of people may feel strongly about a cause when they are thinking about it from a distance. However, when an issue comes close to home, they might struggle with their stance. This is a story about a woman who faced a similar situation.

An Environmental Quandary

I consider myself to be someone who cares about the environment and conservation. For instance, I become incensed when I hear about poachers¹ harming elephants and rhinoceros for their tusks. Saving the whales and dolphins are causes I enthusiastically support. The rabbits that dine in my yard—often four at a time—or the chipmunks that make our yard look like an 18-hole golf course get just a shrug of the shoulders from me. Even the woodchucks that chomp on newly-planted flowers draw little more than a huge sigh of annoyance from me.

However, I have discovered that I am an environmentalist with some bounds. This awakening occurred when I began thinking of the passion some groups show on behalf of a cause. I realized that there could be some animal rights activists that I would not support. In addition to snakes—for which I admit no fondness—and ants—which I won't tolerate marching across my kitchen—one animal quickly came to mind. With all due respect to the charming Mickey and Minnie, I could never see myself supporting a group championing the cause of mice! (Mind you, I have no problem with them being in their environment it's just when they are in my environment that I take exception.)

I realize that this may shock and offend some conservationists, and I certainly don't wish to find irate picketers outside my home. Nonetheless, I am hard pressed to find many virtues or endearing qualities about mice. In fact, if mice are ever proposed to be saved as a possible endangered species, it will be someone else's job to do it—not mine.

You should know that I am too soft-hearted to dispose of mice myself, but it is not beneath me to try to persuade or cajole someone else to do it. Believe me, I have substantial reasons to back my feelings on this issue.

**CHECK FOR
UNDERSTANDING**

What is a cause you feel strongly about? How might you support that cause?

¹ **poacher** *a person who hunts or catches game or fish illegally*

Encounter Number One

My first unsettling encounter with a mouse played out a bit like a comic opera or a childhood nursery rhyme. It happened many years ago. My husband Mitchell and I had recently married and were renting the second-floor apartment in a house converted into a multi-family home. Three young men, who were related, rented the first-floor apartment. They had come from England and worked at a nearby automobile assembly plant.

Every Saturday, the three young men scrubbed and tidied their apartment while I did the same upstairs. Occasionally, I felt a twinge of envy at how quickly they finished their cleaning. In fact, it was while I was engaging in a little “pity party” that this incident began.

I am acutely aware of unusual noises and find that I must track down their origins. One Saturday, one peculiar noise seemed to be coming from our kitchen. Systematically, I opened cabinets and checked the pantry, trying to determine the source of the noise. My investigation turned up nothing. However, I later discovered that something had gnawed a hole in the bread wrapper and several slices of bread had chunks eaten away.

When Mitchell returned from work, he barely had time to enter the apartment before I excitedly poured out my suspicions that we had an intruder, probably a mouse. Calmly and logically, he reasoned that the mouse was most likely somewhere in the pantry. Before he opened the pantry door to search for the errant creature, however, he created a crude barricade of pots and pans around the door opening. Mitchell’s plan was to contain the animal and then find a way to capture it. Without thinking, he grabbed one of our long knives, looking very much like a male version of the woman in the “Three Blind Mice” nursery rhyme.

I broke up in fits of laughter. “What in the world are you planning to do with that, challenge it to a duel?” I asked.

Mitchell replied, “I don’t know it was just an impulsive act.” He appreciated how ridiculous his choice of weaponry was and, chuckling, he laid the knife on the kitchen table. Instantly, the mouse scooted out of the pantry, between the pre-arranged pots and pans, and out in the direction of the living room.

If an official timer had been clocking how fast the mouse was moving compared to how fast I leaped up on a kitchen chair, I’m convinced that I would have been the winner.

My speed had nothing to do with fear of the animal rather, it was an involuntary response to the creature's sudden movement.

A search of the apartment yielded nothing. We then decided to go out and buy three mousetraps. After a few near-finger-catching attempts, we managed to bait two traps with cheese. (We thought baiting three traps to catch one mouse would constitute overkill.) It wasn't a restful night as we waited to hear either little claws tapping on wooden floors or the snap of a trap being sprung. We heard neither.

There was no question about who would go into the kitchen first the next morning. Mitchell gave a low chuckle. "That's one clever mouse we've got. The cheese is gone, but it somehow avoided springing the traps."

For two more nights, we left traps, but the cheese remained untouched. The following day, my husband met one of our downstairs neighbors. Mitchell casually inquired if they had been having any problem with mice.

"Oh, yes," our neighbor replied, "we've caught one a few times and put it outside."

Mitchell explained that I didn't especially like mice in the apartment. We never had another mouse intruder.

Encounter Number Two

It was a brisk late winter morning, and on my way to work, I had to stop at a stationery store to purchase a few items for an important meeting. I opened the garage door and quickly backed my car out. As I turned my head back around, quite unexpectedly, I found two small, black beady eyes staring at me through the windshield. A small gray mouse was perched on the hood of my car.

When it still didn't move even after I had blown my horn, I knew it must be dead. The mouse had surely come in to escape the cold and found warmth on my car's hood. I felt sorry for the creature, but I shivered involuntarily thinking how easily it must have gotten into our home. Getting out of the car, I located a broom in the garage with which I swept the mouse off onto the driveway. I had no time—nor, honestly, the desire—to deal with a dead mouse just then. More suitable arrangements would have to await my return home.

Returning home later on that evening, I shuddered at the task of disposing of the mouse. I wanted to accomplish it without having to see those beady eyes again. But

when I parked and searched for the mouse, it was nowhere to be found. It was likely that a bird or other animal had come along and taken the mouse away.

Encounter Number Three

My co-workers and I found some unmistakable signs of a mouse on the tops of our desks when we arrived at work one morning. My office was near the building's cafeteria, an attraction to mice. The Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds was alerted to our discovery. He informed us that the exterminators had been in and steps had been taken to rid the building of mice, and we shouldn't see any more telltale signs that they had been there.

Unfortunately, the mice were persistent. Before the exterminators arrived this time, however, our mouse made its appearance. The office was quiet when a rustling of paper on a table abutting a wall drew our attention. Then, we saw the unmistakable pointed, whiskered face of a mouse. Ronnie, one of the custodians, happened to be just out in the hallway, so we summoned him to get rid of our unwanted visitor.

He wasn't overly enthusiastic about dealing with a mouse, judging by his demeanor. "What do you want me to do about it?" he inquired plaintively.

It seemed like a silly question, but we responded in unison: "Get rid of it!"

The mouse was flushed out of our office and into the hallway with our rather reluctant custodian lumbering after it, waving a large wastebasket. The mouse became confused by people coming down the hall toward it, giving Ronnie the opportunity to trap the mouse under the wastebasket. His supervisor arrived about then and, taking charge, ordered Ronnie to get a special sticky pad the exterminators had left to snare the mice. A pad was carefully slipped under the basket as it was raised ever so slightly on one side, ending this episode.

In telling our story to a colleague in another office, we learned that our experience paled by comparison. That morning, when she had opened a drawer in her desk, a mouse had jumped out. Somehow, following the scent of a chocolate bar, it had found a niche large enough to crawl through.

* * *

Perhaps one day I will get over my fear of and disgust with the mouse as a species. Mice are awfully cute, but I'm fairly certain that I'll be championing my environmentalist philosophy in other ways instead. ■

1. What causes the author to jump onto a chair?

- A. a mouse sitting on the hood of her car
- B. a mouse running out of her pantry
- C. a mouse popping out of her desk at work
- D. a mouse eating the bread on the counter

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread "Encounter Number One."

2. In addition to mice, the author would also not fight to protect and save

- A. snakes and ants.
- B. rabbits and chipmunks.
- C. woodchucks and squirrels.
- D. whales and dolphins.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread the second paragraph.

3. The author compares her first encounter with a mouse to

- A. a horror movie.
- B. a nursery rhyme.
- C. a famous opera.
- D. a sword fight.

HINT: This question asks you to recognize a comparison that the author made in the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread Encounter Number One.

4. What does the word "irate" mean in the following sentence from the passage: "I don't wish to find irate picketers outside my home"?

- A. pleasant
- B. excited
- C. gloomy
- D. furious

HINT: This question asks you to identify the meaning of the word "irate." Are there any clues to the word's meaning in the sentence?

5. Which of the following contributes most to the suspense of Encounter Number Two?

- A. the author's hurry to get to the stationery store
- B. the author's thought of getting rid of the mouse later in the day
- C. the cold weather on the morning the author sees the mouse
- D. the author trying to move the mouse off the hood of her car

HINT: This question asks you to think about the way the author used words to create a sense of suspense in the passage. Reread Encounter Number Two and take note of text that would lead you to think of the future in some way.

6. Which word best describes the author of this passage?

- A. adventurous
- B. humorous
- C. courageous
- D. generous

HINT: This question asks you to think about what the author of this passage is like. What was the tone of this passage? What does that tell you about the author?

7. The author most likely breaks the story up into sections to

- A. teach the reader how to catch a mouse.
- B. explain how the episodes relate to one another.
- C. clearly define the different episodes.
- D. show how a mouse can be a tricky opponent.

HINT: This question asks you to think about why the author organized the text the way that she did. Did the organization help you understand the passage? How?

8. Mitchell thinks that the mouse is clever when he

- A. traps the mouse under a wastebasket, but cannot find it later.
- B. discovers that the mouse came into the garage to keep warm.
- C. finds a small hole that the mouse used to get inside a desk.
- D. sees that the mouse ate the cheese, but did not flip the trap.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread Encounter Number One.

9. In Encounter Number Two, why does the author feel relieved when she arrives home after work?

- A. Her husband had bought more traps.
- B. Her husband is already home.
- C. The mouse is caught in a trap.
- D. The mouse had disappeared.

HINT: This question asks you to recall a detail from the passage. If you are unsure of the answer, reread Encounter Number Two.

10. This story is mainly about a woman who

- A. protects the environment.
- B. has a fear of mice.
- C. spends time in nature.
- D. loves all kinds of animals.

HINT: This question asks you to identify the central idea of the passage. Think about what you have read. What do you think the author was trying to say?



11. "An Environmental Quandary" is the title of this story. The definition for the word "quandary" is "a state of difficulty, perplexity, uncertainty or hesitation; a predicament."

- **Describe the quandary the author is facing.**

Use specific information from the story and any additional insight to support your response.

Use specific information from the story and any additional insight to support your response.