

Introduction

Today's students receive information from an ever-increasing number of sources. To manage this overload of information, students must be able to distinguish between what is important and what is not—a key skill in reading nonfiction. They must understand what they read in traditional forms of nonfiction, such as textbooks and news articles, but they must also comprehend newer forms of nonfiction, such as advertisements on Web sites and e-mail on the Internet. Many students can benefit from reading more nonfiction, but finding good examples of nonfiction for instruction at different grade levels can be challenging.

How to Use This Book

The purpose of this book is to provide interesting, well-written nonfiction selections for students to read. These selections can be used for practice and instruction in reading nonfiction, and they can be used to help prepare students for taking tests that include nonfiction passages.

This book provides 24 grade-appropriate nonfiction texts in a wide variety of genres, from informational articles, letters, and biographies to e-mail announcements and how-to guides. Each text (of one page or less) focuses on a high-interest topic and has:

- a prereading question to help students focus on what they read.
- a set of 2–6 comprehension questions that resemble the kinds of questions students will see on standardized tests.

The questions with these texts are designed to measure critical thinking and comprehension skills, such as summarizing information, drawing conclusions, and evaluating an author's purpose and point of view. These questions will help you assess students' comprehension of the material and will help students practice answering test questions. For different passages, questions include multiple-choice items, short-answer items, and written-response items that require longer answers. (You will find answers to these questions in the Answer Key beginning on page 46.)

Extending Activities

For some of these richly detailed texts, you may want to have students go beyond answering only the questions that are provided. For example, for any given text you could have students write a summary of the selection in their own words or rewrite the passage from a different point of view. For some pairs of texts, you might have students compare and contrast the two selections. For other texts, you might want to create writing prompts and have students write full-length essays about what they have learned. Students will benefit from reading and analyzing these texts, discussing them in class or in small groups, and writing about them in a variety of ways.

TEXT 1 Who were Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling?

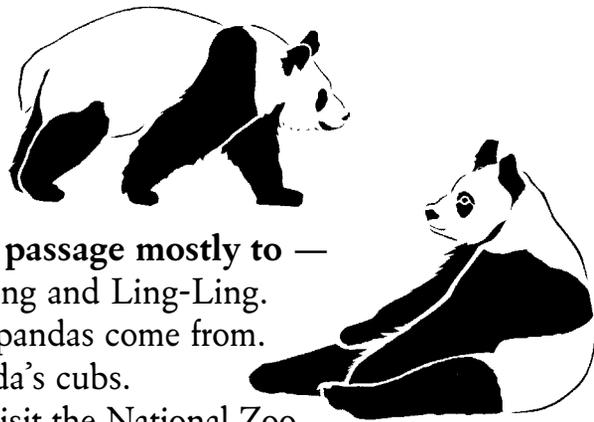
Panda Pair

In 1972, Americans fell in love with two giant pandas named Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling. The pandas came to the United States from China. The National Zoo in Washington, D.C., became the pandas' new home. On their first day there, 20,000 people visited the two pandas. The crowds kept coming year after year.

Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling were just cubs when they got to the United States. As the years passed, many hoped the pair would have cubs of their own. Ling-Ling gave birth several times. But none of the babies

lived more than a few days. Each time a cub died, people around the world felt sad.

Both pandas lived to an old age. Ling-Ling was 23 when she died in 1992. Hsing-Hsing died in 1999 at the age of 28. But the pandas were not forgotten. At the National Zoo, the glass walls of their home were covered with letters from children. The letters expressed the children's love for the pandas and told how much they were missed.



- 1. The author wrote this passage mostly to —**
 - (A) tell about Hsing-Hsing and Ling-Ling.
 - (B) explain where giant pandas come from.
 - (C) describe a giant panda's cubs.
 - (D) convince people to visit the National Zoo.
- 2. According to the author, how did people feel about the pandas?**

- 3. If you visited the National Zoo in 2000, what would you have seen at the pandas' home?**

TEXT 2 *What advice does Vera give to her cousin?*

April 11

Dear Morey,

I just got your letter with the picture of you riding your bike. From the smile on your face, I can tell how much fun you're having. I still remember when you could hardly ride a tricycle. You've come a long way!

Now here's some advice. I'm sure you're a good rider. But you will fall off that bike now and then. So please get yourself a helmet. Wear it every time you ride. A helmet will help protect you from a head injury. Wearing a helmet when you ride a bike is as important as wearing your seat belt when you ride in a car!

No, I'm not trying to be a bossy know-it-all. I just don't want a bad fall to wipe that smile off your face. When you come to visit this summer, bring your bike and your helmet. We'll take some great rides together!

Your cousin,
Vera



1. **From this letter, what can you tell about the picture of Morey that he sent to Vera?**

(A) He is riding a tricycle.	(C) He is in his driveway.
(B) He is not wearing a helmet.	(D) He is looking scared.

2. **Vera's advice shows that she —**

(F) cares a lot about safety.	(H) doesn't like riding bikes.
(G) is often bossy and mean.	(J) is learning to drive a car.

3. **What will Morey do with Vera during the summer?**

Answer Key

1. Panda Pair

1. A
2. Example: People loved the pandas, and now people miss them.
3. Example: You would have seen that the walls of their home were covered with letters from children.

2. Letter from Vera

1. B
2. F
3. Example: He will visit Vera at her home, and they'll both go bike riding.