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“To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must read widely and deeply from among a broad range of high-quality, increasingly challenging literary and informational texts. Through extensive reading of stories, dramas, poems, and myths from diverse cultures and different time periods, students gain literary and cultural knowledge as well as familiarity with various text structures and elements. By reading texts in history/social studies, science, and other disciplines, students build a foundation of knowledge in these fields that will also give them the background to be better readers in all content areas. Students can only gain this foundation when the curriculum is intentionally and coherently structured to develop rich content knowledge within and across grades. Students also acquire the habits of reading independently and closely, which are essential to their future success.”

—COMMON CORE STATE  
STANDARDS FOR ENGLISH  
LANGUAGE ARTS, JUNE 2010

*25 Complex Text Passages to Meet the Common Core: Literature and Informational Texts—Grade 6* includes complex reading passages with companion comprehension question pages for teaching the two types of texts—Literature and Informational—covered in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English Language Arts. The passages and lessons in this book address the rigorous expectations put forth by the CCSS “that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades.” This book embraces nine of the ten CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading that inform solid instruction for literary and informational texts.

### Anchor Standards for Reading

#### Key Ideas and Details

- 1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
- 2 Determine central ideas or themes of a text; summarize key supporting details and ideas.
- 3 Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact throughout a text.

#### Craft and Structure

- 4 Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
- 5 Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of text relate to each other and the whole.
- 6 Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- 7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- 8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

#### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

- 10 Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

## Passage 1 Gym Jam • page 26

### Literature: Realistic Fiction

► **Focus** In this story, students explore character and setting as they read about a common problem and its realistic resolution.

#### ► Teaching Tips

##### Before Reading

- Invite students to share prior experiences they have had as newcomers in a school, group, or community. List common concerns, questions, and adjustment strategies.

##### During Reading

- Guide readers to jot down comments about Mikayla's character and attitudes in the margins as they read.

##### After Reading

- Have students write a summary of Mikayla that includes her current situation and personality traits. Challenge them to predict possible outcomes for her beyond the story.

#### Common Core Connections

RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5, RL.6.6, RL.6.10 • W.6.9, W.6.10 • L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.4, L.6.5, L.6.6

#### Complexity Index

Quantitative:  
Lexile 930

Qualitative	1	2	3	4	5
Meaning	※				
Structure	※				
Language	※				
Knowledge	※				

#### Reader & Task

- The issues faced by a new student in school will be familiar and motivating to most readers.
- Encourage students to focus on the changes in Mikayla as the piece progresses.

## Passage 2 The Golden Axe • page 28

### Literature: Fable

► **Focus** This descriptive retelling of an Aesop fable challenges readers to understand the actions of its characters to interpret its moral lesson.

#### ► Teaching Tips

##### Before Reading

- Engage prior knowledge of fables from Aesop and other cultural traditions.

##### During Reading

- Tell students to highlight unfamiliar words, phrases, or ideas for later discussion.

##### After Reading

- Have students summarize the story in their own words.
- Challenge students to write a character sketch of the humble woodcutter as a follow-up to answering question 5 (page 29).

#### Common Core Connections

RL.6.1, RL.6.2, RL.6.3, RL.6.4, RL.6.5, RL.6.6, RL.6.10 • W.6.9, W.6.10 • L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.4, L.6.5, L.6.6

#### Complexity Index

Quantitative:  
Lexile 940

Qualitative	1	2	3	4	5
Meaning		※			
Structure	※				
Language		※			
Knowledge		※			

#### Reader & Task

- Most students will be familiar with the characteristics of a fable and its concluding lesson or moral.
- Encourage students to look for similarities and differences between the main character and the other woodcutters who learn of his story. Also have them notice Mercury's responses.

**Passage 10** Private Eye • page 44

**Informational Text: Word Origin Article**

► **Focus** This article presents detailed information chronologically to help students understand the etymology of a familiar expression.

► **Teaching Tips**

**Before Reading**

- Introduce the term *etymology* (the study of word or phrase origins).
- Preview and pronounce the word *surveillance* [sir-VAY-lehns].

**During Reading**

- Direct students to highlight unfamiliar words or phrases. Encourage them to use context clues to figure them out wherever possible.

**After Reading**

- Brainstorm a list of familiar phrases or words and invite students to guess their origins. Then challenge students to consult dictionaries and/or online sources for confirmation.

**Common Core Connections**

RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.5, RI.6.6, RI.6.7, RI.6.10 • W.6.9, W.6.10 • L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.4, L.6.5, L.6.6

**Complexity Index**

**Quantitative:**  
Lexile 940

Qualitative	1	2	3	4	5
Purpose		*			
Structure	*				
Language			*		
Knowledge			*		

**Reader & Task**

- English language learners may have difficulty understanding the meaning of familiar expressions because they are usually not literal.
- Use the question that precedes the passage to have students discuss how the author builds a case for the origin of the expression *private eye*.

**Passage 11** A Writer’s Story • page 46

**Informational Text: Author Interview**

► **Focus** By reading an interview, students have the opportunity to make connections between an author’s life experiences and his career.

► **Teaching Tips**

**Before Reading**

- Review the elements of an interview. Focus on the kinds of questions that would elicit the most honest, detailed, and informative responses.  
(Note: This interview is excerpted from a longer interview with Laurence Yep on the Scholastic Teachers website.)

**During Reading**

- Point out to students that direct quotations are usually shown within quotation marks; sometimes, however, especially if they are long, quotations can be italicized, as they are in this piece.

**After Reading**

- Display some titles by Laurence Yep. Invite students who have read any of them to offer commentary and feedback. Encourage students to pick one to read and challenge them to look for evidence of the author they have come to know.

**Common Core Connections**

RI.6.1, RI.6.2, RI.6.3, RI.6.4, RI.6.5, RI.6.6, RI.6.7, RI.6.10 • W.6.9, W.6.10 • L.6.1, L.6.2, L.6.3, L.6.4, L.6.5, L.6.6

**Complexity Index**

**Quantitative:**  
Lexile 950

Qualitative	1	2	3	4	5
Purpose		*			
Structure		*			
Language			*		
Knowledge			*		

**Reader & Task**

- Some students may relate to Yep’s feelings of being part of two worlds. Others may have experienced escaping into the imaginary worlds of literature.
- Have students make connections between Yep’s early experiences in life and his professional pursuits as an adult.

# Gym Jam

## Why does Kevin's invitation affect Mikayla so strongly?

1 It's challenging enough starting seventh  
2 grade at a new school. But for the past  
3 month, Mikayla found herself a reluctant  
4 newcomer in a strange city more than a  
5 thousand miles from where she'd lived  
6 her whole life. She could barely name the  
7 streets between her house and Ashland  
8 Middle School. Seventh grade seemed  
9 agreeable enough, most of her teachers  
10 were reasonable, and her three-story school  
11 was better equipped and more spacious  
12 than the one back in Oneida. Still, Mikayla  
13 was exhausted from the never-ending  
14 getting accustomed to things.

15 Mikayla's newbie noggin was awlirl with sensory overload. She knew few  
16 middle-school kids well enough to confide in, but knew how deeply she longed  
17 for friendships. Not surprisingly, it felt like most of her classmates had been  
18 together since kindergarten and few had extended welcomes to her. Most  
19 seemed occupied enough with their own concerns to notice Mikayla's isolation.

20 Even when lonely, Mikayla could always raise her spirits by singing. She sang  
21 along to the radio, TV, and her MP3 player. She crooned in the shower, warbled  
22 through chores, hummed on the bus, and even serenaded her disinterested cats.  
23 But singing alone was less gratifying than singing in an ensemble.

24 At the close of a particularly strenuous Monday, Mikayla bumped into Kevin  
25 Stokes at their neighboring lockers. "Mikayla, you free tomorrow afternoon? It's  
26 our first Gym Jam of the season, and we're hoping for a maximum crowd."

27 "Thanks for asking, Kevin, but I'm a pathetic athlete."

28 "Gym Jam's not about sports, it's about music," Kevin responded. "I've heard  
29 you sing, so I consider you a likely suspect! Bet you didn't know that Coach  
30 Tanaka played drums in a band during college. Every Tuesday, she sets up  
31 her drum kit in the gym for a vocal jam with kids who love to sing. Nobody  
32 auditions; interested singers just show up. She teaches us old rock songs with  
33 arrangements for at least two parts, often three. Occasionally she recruits some  
34 of us as back-up singers! We do harmonies, dance moves, and vocal sound  
35 effects. It's crazy awesome!"

36 Mikayla couldn't believe how perfect this invitation sounded. "I play guitar,  
37 Kev, so should I bring it?"

38 "Couldn't hurt," he said. "But maybe you should just show up this first time  
39 and see how a Gym Jam goes. Do you sing high, medium, or low?"

40 "You bring it, I sing it!" Mikayla chanted, and raced with Kevin toward  
41 the bus.



# Gym Jam

▶ Answer each question. Give evidence from the story.

1 Which is *not* one of Mikayla’s impressions of her new classmates?

- A. Most acted concerned with their own issues.
- B. Most seemed to have been together for years.
- C. Most had not reached out to her.
- D. Most were active and athletic.

How did you determine your response? \_\_\_\_\_

---

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2 Which best describes something that is *awhirl* (line 15)?

- A. It feels painful.
- B. It feels dizzying.
- C. It feels empty and sad.
- D. It feels heavy and solid.

What evidence in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

3 Describe Mikayla’s way to cheer herself up. \_\_\_\_\_

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---

4 What was so perfect about Kevin’s invitation? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

---

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5 How did Mikayla’s attitude change after hearing about the Gym Jam? \_\_\_\_\_

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6 Explain why Mikayla misunderstood Kevin’s offer at first. \_\_\_\_\_

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# The Golden Axe

## Based on a Fable by Aesop

What details suggest that this story is a fable?

1 A humble woodcutter chopped trees daily in the  
2 forest. Late one afternoon, he chose his final tree,  
3 which stood beside a deep green pool. The strokes  
4 the weary woodcutter took were less accurate than  
5 usual. After a mighty swing, his trusty axe slipped  
6 from his grip, flew headfirst into the water, and  
7 disappeared into the green abyss.

8 “Woe unto me!” he bellowed. The axe was his  
9 only possession with which to earn a living; he  
10 lacked the money to obtain another. But he could  
11 neither swim nor dive to retrieve his axe from  
12 such depths. As he shed bitter tears, the winged  
13 god Mercury suddenly appeared to investigate his  
14 misery. Embarrassed, the woodcutter explained  
15 how he lost his axe.

16 Instantly, Mercury plunged deep into the pool to recover the drowned axe.  
17 But the axe Mercury retrieved was made of glittering gold. “Is this your axe?”  
18 the god asked.

19 The truthful woodcutter replied, “No, kind Mercury. That axe is wonderful  
20 beyond description, but it’s not mine.” Mercury set the gold axe on the  
21 ground and dove again to the depths of the pool. Now he retrieved an axe of  
22 shimmering silver. Again, the sincere woodman thanked the winged god, but  
23 described his axe as an ordinary iron tool with a well-worn wooden handle.

24 So Mercury dove a third time, returning with the axe the woodcutter had  
25 lost. “My axe!” he cried in gratitude. “This modest tool enables me to earn  
26 my living; without it I’d be lost. My deepest thanks, O Mercury.”

27 Accepting the woodcutter’s appreciation, the god said, “Because I admire  
28 your honesty, you may possess all three axes—the gold, the silver, and your  
29 own.” The astonished woodcutter knelt to Mercury and then trekked home  
30 with the three axes.

31 Accounts of the woodcutter’s good fortune spread rapidly. Other  
32 woodcutters believed that they could increase their wealth by losing an axe—  
33 or pretending to—and appealing to Mercury for divine help. One by one,  
34 other woodcutters hid their axes in bushes, caves, or deep bodies of water,  
35 and wailed for Mercury’s assistance.

36 Winged Mercury appeared to investigate each man’s plight. Each time,  
37 Mercury displayed an axe of glistening gold, which the man excitedly  
38 claimed as the one he’d unfortunately lost. But instead of “returning” the  
39 gold axe, Mercury used it to deliver to the deceitful woodcutter’s head a sharp  
40 thwack, sending him home in pain, but without any axe at all.



# The Golden Axe

▶ Answer each question. Give evidence from the fable.

1 The pool in the forest was an *abyss* (line 7) because it was very \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. green                       B. clear                       C. deep                       D. cool

What evidence in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 Which of the following is the most reasonable moral for this story?

- A. Honesty is the best policy.                       C. Things aren't always as they seem.  
 B. One good turn deserves another.                       D. A pool may not always return lost tools.

How did you determine your response? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3 Why was the woodcutter's axe handle so well-worn? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 Explain why the woodcutter felt embarrassed (line 14). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5 How would you describe the character of Mercury? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6 What makes a story a fable? Explain. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Private Eye

How does the author build a case for where an expression came from?

1 Private investigators (PIs)  
2 are detectives specially hired  
3 for their skill at digging  
4 up information. Attorneys  
5 hire PIs to gather facts  
6 that help them solve their  
7 cases. Insurance companies  
8 hire them to investigate  
9 claims. And sometimes one  
10 individual will hire a PI to  
11 closely track someone else.

12 So where did the term  
13 *private eye* come from?

14 Although spies have  
15 been around for centuries,  
16 the history of private  
17 investigation can be traced

18 to agencies in France and Great Britain in the early-to-mid 19th century. But  
19 the moniker *private eye* comes from America. It arrived with the emergence  
20 of Allan Pinkerton's National Detective Agency.

21 Pinkerton came to the United States from Scotland and established his  
22 agency in 1850. He quickly gained attention for his keen ability to track  
23 down and apprehend outlaws. He earned a reputation for developing  
24 innovative and creative surveillance techniques. For example, he introduced  
25 the idea of circulating photos of criminals accompanied by detailed records  
26 and descriptions. Pinkerton invented the *mug shot*.

27 Pinkerton is perhaps best known for foiling a plot by Baltimore  
28 secessionists to assassinate President-Elect Abraham Lincoln on his way to  
29 Washington. After that, his spy network served the Federal Army during the  
30 Civil War. His exalted reputation dimmed a little during those years as his  
31 assessments of the enemy's strength routinely turned out to be overestimates.  
32 Nonetheless, his agency continued to prosper. After the war, he returned to  
33 ferreting out law breakers. Jesse James, Butch Cassidy, and the Sundance Kid  
34 were among his targets.

35 The façade of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency building in Chicago  
36 displayed the company's logo. It was a large picture of a wide-open eye  
37 embellished with the company's slogan: "We Never Sleep." This logo was the  
38 likely source of the term *private eye*.



# Private Eye

▶ Answer each question. Give evidence from the article.

1 From which country does the term *private eye* come?

- A. France       B. Scotland       C. Chicago       D. United States

What evidence in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2 The word *façade* (line 35) is an architecture word. Which part of the Chicago building do you think it names?

- A. the roof       B. the front       C. the office       D. the basement

What evidence in the text helped you answer? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3 Why do you think the author gave the term *mug shot* (line 26) in italics? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 For what accomplishment is Allan Pinkerton most famous? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5 Why do you think the author made a paragraph with only one sentence (lines 12 and 13)? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6 Why might the slogan “We Never Sleep” encourage clients to use Pinkerton’s National Detective Agency? Explain.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_