3rd grade reading worksheets

15 sheets, each passage with its questions, with the answer keys together from page 17.

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Grandpa's Map

Read the story. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Every summer, Zoe stayed with her grandpa in a small town by a lake. This year, he gave her a surprise on the first morning: a map he had drawn himself.

It showed his house, the dock, the bakery and the path through the woods. At the end of the path, he had drawn a large X. "Follow the map," he said, "and see what you find."

Zoe walked past the bakery, where the smell of bread made her stomach growl. She followed the path under the tall pines until it opened onto a small beach she had never seen before. On a flat rock sat an old tin box.

Inside were a notebook, a magnifying glass and a note. The note said: "This beach was my secret place when I was your age. Now it is yours too. Write down everything you find here."

That afternoon, Zoe filled two pages with drawings of shells, a frog and the tracks of a heron.

1. **Who drew the map?**

2. **What did Zoe pass on the way to the beach?**

3. **What was in the tin box?**

4. **Why do you think Grandpa wanted Zoe to find the beach herself?**

The Class Plant Sale



Read the story. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Ms. Carter's class wanted to buy new books for their reading corner. Ben had an idea: they could grow plants and sell them.

In March, each student planted tomato seeds in small pots. They set the pots under the classroom lights and took turns watering them. Not every seed grew. Of the 60 pots they planted, 48 had a healthy plant by the end of April.

The class made signs for the sale. Nora painted a big tomato, and Kai wrote the prices in large letters: $2 for one plant, or $5 for three. On the morning of the sale, families lined up before the doors opened.

By noon, every plant was gone. The class counted the money twice to be sure. They had earned $86, which was enough for twelve new books and a soft rug to sit on while they read.

1. **Why did the class decide to sell plants?**

2. **How many pots had a healthy plant by the end of April?**

3. **What did the class do with the money?**

4. **Why do you think the class counted the money twice?**

Four Forces of Flight



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Four forces act on an airplane while it flies: weight, lift, drag and thrust. A force is a push or a pull in one direction.

Weight pulls the airplane down, toward the center of the Earth. To beat its weight, an airplane needs lift, a force that pushes it up. The airplane makes lift by moving through the air, and most of its lift comes from the wings.

The air pushes back against anything that moves through it. That push is called drag, and it slows the airplane down. To beat drag, an airplane needs thrust, a force that pushes it forward. An airplane's engines give it thrust.

The engines do not lift an airplane; the wings do. That is why a glider can fly with no engine at all. A paper airplane is a glider. Your throw gets it moving, so that its wings can make lift.

1. **What are the four forces that act on an airplane while it flies?**

2. **Which part of an airplane makes most of its lift?**

3. **Why can a glider fly with no engine?**

4. **You tape a paper clip to your paper airplane. Which of the four forces gets bigger? What do you think will happen when you fly it?**

The Bald Eagle Comes Back



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The bald eagle is the national symbol of the United States. A grown eagle has a white head, a white tail and a brown body. Young eagles are brown and white, and most have their grown-up feathers by the age of five.

Bald eagles are big birds. A female's wings can stretch up to 8 feet from tip to tip. Fish are their main food. Each year a pair lays one to three eggs, which hatch after about 35 days.

Bald eagles nearly disappeared. After World War II, a chemical called DDT was sprayed to kill mosquitoes and other insects. It made the eagles' eggshells weak. By 1963, only 417 nesting pairs were known.

In 1972, DDT was banned in the United States. Slowly, the eagles came back. In 2007, the bald eagle was taken off the list of threatened and endangered species.

1. **What is the bald eagle's main food?**

2. **How long do bald eagle eggs take to hatch?**

3. **Why did bald eagles nearly disappear?**

4. **What do you think helped the bald eagles come back? Why?**

Your Living Bones



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Your bones are alive. They use oxygen, take in food and need blood, and they change shape over time as you use them.

Together, your bones make a frame called the skeleton. It holds you up against the pull of gravity: when you stand, the big bones of your legs hold up the rest of your body. Your muscles work with your bones to move you, and the bones work like levers.

Your skeleton keeps soft parts safe, too. Your skull surrounds your brain, your backbone protects your spinal cord, and your rib cage helps protect your heart and lungs.

Bones also store calcium, more than any other part of your body. When your blood has too little calcium, your bones let some go.

Inside some bones is a soft part called red marrow. It makes new blood cells: red cells, white cells and platelets.

1. **What does your skull protect?**

2. **What does red marrow make?**

3. **What happens when your blood has too little calcium?**

4. **Why do you think the biggest bones are in your legs?**

Mars, the Red Planet



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Mars is the fourth planet from the Sun, between Earth and Jupiter. It is about half the size of Earth. Mars is called the Red Planet. It is red because of rusty iron in its ground.

Mars is a cold desert. Its average temperature is minus 85 degrees Fahrenheit, far below freezing. Its air is very thin and is made mostly of carbon dioxide, nitrogen and argon. People could not breathe it.

Mars has two moons, called Phobos and Deimos. A day on Mars lasts 24.6 hours, a little longer than a day on Earth. A year on Mars is 687 Earth days, almost twice as long as ours.

Mars is the only planet people have sent rovers to. These robots drive around Mars, taking pictures and measurements. Scientists want to find out whether anything ever lived on Mars long ago.

1. **Why is Mars red?**

2. **What are the names of the two moons of Mars?**

3. **Why could people not breathe on Mars?**

4. **If you lived on Mars, would your birthday come more often or less often than on Earth? Why?**

Inside the Earth



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The Earth is about 12,750 kilometers (km) across. No one has ever seen the bottom of its crust, but scientists have learned that the Earth is made of layers, a little like a boiled egg.

The outside layer is the crust. It is like the shell of the egg: thin, hard and brittle, so it can break. Under the oceans the crust is only about 5 km thick. Under the continents it is about 30 km thick, and under big mountain ranges it can reach 100 km.

Below the crust is the mantle, like the white of the egg. It is hot, dense rock, about 2,900 km thick. The deeper you go inside the Earth, the hotter it gets, and the harder the rock above presses down.

In the middle is the core, made of metal, mostly iron and nickel. Unlike the yolk of an egg, it has two parts. The outer core is liquid. As the Earth turns, the outer core spins, and this makes the Earth's magnetic field. The inner core is solid.

1. **What is the outside layer of the Earth called?**

2. **How thick is the mantle?**

3. **What happens when the outer core spins as the Earth turns?**

4. **The passage says the crust is like the shell of an egg. How are they alike?**

Why We Have Seasons



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Many people think it is summer when Earth is closest to the Sun. That idea makes sense, but it is wrong. In the northern half of Earth, we are closest to the Sun in January, in winter, and farthest away in July, in summer.

Earth spins around an imaginary pole called its axis, one full turn each day. The spin gives us day and night. But the axis does not stand up straight. It leans over a bit.

As Earth travels around the Sun, its tilted axis always points the same way. Around June, the North Pole tilts toward the Sun. The Sun's rays hit the northern half of Earth more directly than at any other time of year, so it is summer there. Around December, the South Pole tilts toward the Sun, and it is winter in the north.

The two halves of Earth take turns. When it is summer in the northern half, it is winter in the southern half.

1. **When is Earth closest to the Sun?**

2. **What does Earth's spin on its axis give us?**

3. **Why is it summer in the northern half of Earth in June?**

4. **In December it is winter in the north. What season is it then in the southern half of Earth? How do you know?**

Sea Otters and the Kelp Forest



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Along much of the west coast of North America, kelp grows in forests under the water. Kelp is a large brown alga, a kind of seaweed. Like plants, it uses sunlight to make its own food, so it is a producer.

Spiny sea urchins eat the kelp. Sea otters eat the sea urchins. That makes the sea otter the top predator in this food chain.

In the 1800s, people hunted too many sea otters for their fur. With fewer otters to eat them, the sea urchins grew in number and ate all of the kelp. Then, with no food left, the urchins died too.

Most of the time, sea otters keep the sea urchins from growing too quickly in number, and that protects the kelp forest. Since 1911, laws that protect sea otters have helped their numbers grow again.

1. **What do sea urchins eat?**

2. **Which animal is the top predator in this food chain?**

3. **What happened to the kelp when too many sea otters were hunted?**

4. **Why do you think a kelp forest needs sea otters?**

The Bison of Yellowstone

Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The bison is the largest land animal in North America. A grown male, called a bull, can weigh up to 2,000 pounds. Many people call bison buffalo, but scientists say bison.

A bison has a big hump on its back, made of strong muscles. In winter, it swings its head from side to side like a snowplow to sweep the snow off the grass underneath. Thick skin, thick fur and layers of fat keep it warm.

Bison eat mostly grasses and sedges. They roll in the dirt to keep biting flies away. Baby bison, called calves, are born in late April and May. Two or three hours later, they can keep up with the herd.

Yellowstone National Park is the only place in the United States where bison have lived since prehistoric times. By 1902, poachers had left only about two dozen. The Army protected them and brought in more from private herds. Thousands live there today.

1. **What is a bison's hump made of?**

2. **When are bison calves born?**

3. **How does a bison reach grass in winter, when snow covers it?**

4. **Only about two dozen bison were left in 1902. Why do you think there are thousands today?**

Jupiter, the Giant Planet



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Jupiter is the fifth planet from the Sun, so its neighbors are Mars and Saturn. It is the biggest planet in our solar system. It has more than twice as much mass as all the other planets put together.

Jupiter is a gas giant. It is made mostly of hydrogen and helium, and it has no solid surface to stand on. Its very thick air is covered in swirling stripes of clouds.

Jupiter has giant storms. The best known is the Great Red Spot, a storm bigger than Earth that has been raging for more than 300 years. Jupiter has rings too, but they are so faint that they are very hard to see.

A day on Jupiter goes by in just 10 hours. But one year on Jupiter, the time it takes to go around the Sun, is as long as 11.8 Earth years. People have known about Jupiter since ancient times, because it is easy to see with just our eyes.

1. **Which two planets are Jupiter's neighbors?**

2. **What is the Great Red Spot?**

3. **Why could you not stand on Jupiter?**

4. **Is a day on Jupiter longer or shorter than a day on Earth? How do you know?**

The First Airplane Flight

Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

Wilbur and Orville Wright were brothers who spent years working out how to fly. Before they built an airplane with an engine, they made more than a thousand glides from a big sand hill on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Those glides made them the first real pilots.

The brothers could not find an engine light enough for their airplane, so they designed their own. They also designed its propellers, the first ones that worked well on an airplane. Their new airplane, the Flyer, weighed 605 pounds.

On December 14, 1903, they tossed a coin to decide who would fly first. Wilbur won, but the Flyer climbed too steeply and dove into the sand.

On December 17, it was Orville's turn. At 10:35 he took off into a strong wind, with Wilbur running beside the wing, and came down in the sand about 120 feet away. The brothers flew three more times that day. The last flight, by Wilbur, went 852 feet in 59 seconds.

1. **How many glides did the brothers make before they flew with an engine?**

2. **How far did the last flight on December 17 go, and for how long?**

3. **Why did the brothers design their own engine?**

4. **Why do you think all those glides helped the brothers fly the Flyer?**

Water on the Move



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The water on Earth is always moving. The path it follows is called the water cycle. On the way, water changes between a liquid, a solid and a gas. It is a liquid in oceans, rivers and lakes, a solid as ice and snow, and a gas, called water vapor, in the air.

Heat from sunlight makes water evaporate from oceans, lakes and streams: it turns into water vapor. Water from plants and trees goes up into the air too.

The warm water vapor rises. Higher up, the air is cooler, so the vapor turns back into liquid water and makes clouds. This is called condensation.

When a cloud is full of water, the water falls as rain or snow. Rain fills lakes and streams, gives plants water and refills the water under the ground that we drink. Then the cycle starts all over again.

1. **What three forms does water take in the water cycle?**

2. **What makes water evaporate from oceans and lakes?**

3. **How do clouds form?**

4. **A puddle on the playground is gone by the afternoon. Where do you think the water went? Why?**

Main idea and details

Write the main idea at the top. Under it, write the details that tell more about it or prove it.

Name _____ Date _____

Main idea

What is it mostly about?

Detail 1

Detail 2

Detail 3

In my own words

Put the main idea and the details together in a sentence or two.

Cause and effect

Write each cause, why something happens, and its effect, what happens because of it.

Name _____ Date _____

Cause Why did it happen?	→	Effect What happened?

Cause Why did it happen?	→	Effect What happened?

Cause Why did it happen?	→	Effect What happened?

Answer key

Grandpa's Map

1. Who drew the map?
   Zoe's grandpa.

2. What did Zoe pass on the way to the beach?
   The bakery. Then she followed the path under the tall pines.

3. What was in the tin box?
   A notebook, a magnifying glass and a note.

4. Why do you think Grandpa wanted Zoe to find the beach herself?
   Sample answer: to make it an adventure, and so the place would feel like her own secret too.

Answer key

The Class Plant Sale

1. Why did the class decide to sell plants?
   To earn money for new books for their reading corner.

2. How many pots had a healthy plant by the end of April?
   48 (out of 60).

3. What did the class do with the money?
   They bought twelve new books and a soft rug for the reading corner.

4. Why do you think the class counted the money twice?
   Sample answer: to make sure they had counted it right before spending it.

Answer key

Four Forces of Flight

1. What are the four forces that act on an airplane while it flies?
   Weight, lift, drag and thrust.

2. Which part of an airplane makes most of its lift?
   The wings.

3. Why can a glider fly with no engine?
   The wings, not the engines, lift an airplane. A glider only needs a push to get it moving.

4. You tape a paper clip to your paper airplane. Which of the four forces gets bigger? What do you think will happen when you fly it?
   Sample answer: its weight, because the plane now carries more. Fly it and see: with too much weight, a paper airplane drops to the ground instead of gliding.

Answer key

The Bald Eagle Comes Back

1. What is the bald eagle's main food?
   Fish.

2. How long do bald eagle eggs take to hatch?
   About 35 days.

3. Why did bald eagles nearly disappear?
   DDT, a chemical sprayed to kill insects, made their eggshells weak.

4. What do you think helped the bald eagles come back? Why?
   Sample answer: banning DDT in 1972, because then the eagles could lay strong eggs again and more of their chicks hatched.

Answer key

Your Living Bones

1. What does your skull protect?
   Your brain.

2. What does red marrow make?
   New blood cells: red cells, white cells and platelets.

3. What happens when your blood has too little calcium?
   Your bones let some of the calcium they store go into the blood.

4. Why do you think the biggest bones are in your legs?
   Sample answer: when you stand, the leg bones hold up the rest of the body, so they need to be big and strong.

Answer key

Mars, the Red Planet

1. Why is Mars red?
   Because of rusty iron in its ground.

2. What are the names of the two moons of Mars?
   Phobos and Deimos.

3. Why could people not breathe on Mars?
   Its air is very thin and is made mostly of carbon dioxide, nitrogen and argon.

4. If you lived on Mars, would your birthday come more often or less often than on Earth? Why?
   Sample answer: less often, about half as often, because a year on Mars is 687 Earth days, almost twice as long as a year on Earth.

Answer key

Inside the Earth

1. What is the outside layer of the Earth called?
   The crust.

2. How thick is the mantle?
   About 2,900 km.

3. What happens when the outer core spins as the Earth turns?
   It makes the Earth's magnetic field.

4. The passage says the crust is like the shell of an egg. How are they alike?
   Sample answer: both are a thin, hard layer on the outside, and both can break.

Answer key

Why We Have Seasons

1. When is Earth closest to the Sun?
   In January.

2. What does Earth's spin on its axis give us?
   Day and night.

3. Why is it summer in the northern half of Earth in June?
   Because the North Pole tilts toward the Sun, so the Sun's rays hit the northern half more directly than at any other time of year.

4. In December it is winter in the north. What season is it then in the southern half of Earth? How do you know?
   Sample answer: summer, because in December the South Pole tilts toward the Sun, and the two halves take turns.

Answer key

Sea Otters and the Kelp Forest

1. What do sea urchins eat?
   Kelp.

2. Which animal is the top predator in this food chain?
   The sea otter.

3. What happened to the kelp when too many sea otters were hunted?
   The sea urchins grew in number and ate all of the kelp.

4. Why do you think a kelp forest needs sea otters?
   Sample answer: sea otters eat sea urchins, so there are never so many urchins that they eat all the kelp.

Answer key

The Bison of Yellowstone

1. What is a bison's hump made of?
   Strong muscles.

2. When are bison calves born?
   In late April and May.

3. How does a bison reach grass in winter, when snow covers it?
   It swings its head from side to side like a snowplow and sweeps the snow away.

4. Only about two dozen bison were left in 1902. Why do you think there are thousands today?
   Sample answer: because the Army protected them from poachers and brought in more bison, so the herds could grow again.

Answer key

Jupiter, the Giant Planet

1. Which two planets are Jupiter's neighbors?
   Mars and Saturn.

2. What is the Great Red Spot?
   A giant storm, bigger than Earth, that has been raging for more than 300 years.

3. Why could you not stand on Jupiter?
   Because it is a gas giant, made mostly of hydrogen and helium, with no solid surface.

4. Is a day on Jupiter longer or shorter than a day on Earth? How do you know?
   Sample answer: shorter, because a day on Jupiter goes by in 10 hours and a day on Earth lasts 24 hours.

Answer key

The First Airplane Flight

1. How many glides did the brothers make before they flew with an engine?
   More than a thousand.

2. How far did the last flight on December 17 go, and for how long?
   852 feet, in 59 seconds.

3. Why did the brothers design their own engine?
   They could not find an engine light enough for their airplane.

4. Why do you think all those glides helped the brothers fly the Flyer?
   Sample answer: they had already learned how to steer a flying machine in the air, so they were skilled pilots before they ever added an engine.

Answer key

Water on the Move

1. What three forms does water take in the water cycle?
   A liquid, a solid (ice and snow) and a gas (water vapor).

2. What makes water evaporate from oceans and lakes?
   Heat from sunlight.

3. How do clouds form?
   Warm water vapor rises. Higher up the air is cooler, so the vapor turns back into liquid water and makes clouds.

4. A puddle on the playground is gone by the afternoon. Where do you think the water went? Why?
   Sample answer: into the air as water vapor, because heat from sunlight makes liquid water evaporate.