6th grade reading worksheets

12 sheets, each passage with its questions, with the answer keys together from page 14.

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The Robot That Kept Tipping Over



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

Name _____ Date _____

Marcus had spent three weeks designing the arm for his team's robot, and he was proud of every part of it. The arm could stretch high enough to grab a foam block from the top shelf of the practice course, the most valuable position at the county competition. There was only one problem: every time the arm reached its full height, the whole robot toppled over. Marcus attached weights to the back and adjusted the motor, but nothing solved it, and the competition was eight days away.

At Tuesday's meeting, Rosa, who rarely spoke up, slid her notebook across the table. She had sketched a shorter arm that scooped blocks from the bottom shelves. "Each block scores fewer points," she said quietly, "but this design would never tip over."

Marcus felt his face grow warm. He was the team captain, and the tall arm had been his idea from the beginning, so he wanted to insist that he only needed more time. Instead, he suggested a fair experiment: each design would get ten attempts on the practice course. The tall arm toppled over six times. Rosa's arm completed all ten without a single fall and earned more points in total.

The team built Rosa's design that weekend, and at the competition they finished third out of fourteen teams. When a judge asked who had designed the arm, Marcus pointed to Rosa before anyone else could answer.

1. **What is a theme of this story?**

2. **What does "Marcus felt his face grow warm" show about him? What in the paragraph shows it?**

3. **How does Marcus change from the beginning of the story to the end?**

4. **Was the experiment a good way for the team to choose a design? Support your answer with details from the story.**

Two Sides of the Story



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

Name _____ Date _____

Lena: For five days in a row, the seat beside Lena in the cafeteria had stayed empty. Kayla had been her best friend since second grade, but now, as soon as the bell rang, Kayla grabbed her trumpet case and hurried away without a word. Lena decided that Kayla must have found new friends in the band. On Friday, she wrote a short note: "If you don't want to be friends anymore, just tell me." She almost slipped it through the vents of Kayla's locker, but at the last moment she pushed it into her pocket and walked toward the band room instead.

Kayla: Kayla had a secret that embarrassed her. The band director had given her a solo for the spring concert, and she kept cracking the highest note, no matter how carefully she practiced. Every lunch period, she rehearsed alone in the band room, hoping to fix the problem before anyone heard her fail. When the door opened and Lena walked in, Kayla's stomach dropped. She was certain Lena would laugh at her. Instead, Lena asked quietly why she had disappeared all week, and Kayla took a deep breath and told her the truth.

Lena pulled the crumpled note out of her pocket and showed it to her. The two girls realized that each of them had been afraid of something imaginary. After that, Lena ate lunch in the band room every day, listening patiently to the solo until Kayla finally hit the high note.

1. **What is a theme of this story?**

2. **What does "Kayla's stomach dropped" mean here? What in the paragraph shows it?**

3. **Why did the author tell the story from both girls' points of view?**

4. **Was Lena right to go to the band room instead of leaving the note? Support your answer with details from the story.**

The Saturday Shift



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

Name _____ Date _____

Every Saturday, Nadia worked the front counter at her family's bakery from seven in the morning until two in the afternoon. She boxed muffins, counted change and remembered which regular customers wanted their bread sliced. Her parents depended on her, especially since her older brother had left for college.

On Wednesday, her friend Grace invited her to the science museum on Saturday afternoon, and the bus would leave at one o'clock. Nadia wanted to go more than anything, but Saturday was the busiest day of the week. At first she considered simply asking for the day off. Then she imagined her father alone at the register while the line stretched out the door, and she decided to make a plan instead. That evening, she asked her parents whether she could arrive at five, help package the morning orders and leave at twelve thirty. Her mother raised an eyebrow. "Five o'clock is extremely early," she said. "Are you sure you can be cheerful at that hour?" Nadia promised that she could.

On Saturday, her alarm rang in complete darkness. She was still yawning when she arrived, but she packed forty boxes of dinner rolls before the doors opened and worked the counter all morning without a single mistake. At twelve thirty, her father handed her a bag of cinnamon buns and thanked her for her help. Nadia reached the bus with flour still on her shoes, and she shared the buns with everyone.

1. **What is a theme of this story?**

2. **What does "raised an eyebrow" mean here? What in the paragraph shows it?**

3. **Why did Nadia decide not to simply ask for the day off?**

4. **Was Nadia's plan fair to her family? Support your answer with details from the story.**

The Cracked Lens

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

Name _____ Date _____

Eli had signed out the school's most expensive camera to photograph the soccer game for the yearbook, and Mr. Delgado, the yearbook adviser, had reminded him twice to keep the strap around his neck. During the second half, though, Eli removed the strap to get a better angle from the top of the bleachers. When the crowd jumped up to celebrate a goal, someone bumped his elbow, the camera struck the metal step, and a thin crack spread across the lens.

On the walk home, Eli considered his choices. Nobody had seen the camera fall, so he could quietly return it to the cabinet on Monday, and the next student to use it might be blamed. Or he could tell Mr. Delgado the truth and probably lose his position as a photographer.

He barely slept that night. On Monday, he arrived early, set the camera on Mr. Delgado's desk and explained exactly what had happened, including the part about the strap. He offered to pay for the repair with the money he had saved from walking his neighbors' dogs.

Mr. Delgado examined the lens carefully for a long moment. A replacement lens would cost eighty dollars, he said, and he accepted Eli's offer to pay half, while the yearbook budget would cover the rest. "You told me before I discovered it myself," he said. "That is exactly the kind of person I want holding our cameras." Two weeks later, Eli photographed the championship game, and he kept the strap around his neck the entire time.

1. **What is a theme of this story?**

2. **What does "examined" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **How did Eli's choice to tell the truth lead to the ending of the story?**

4. **Was it fair for Eli to pay half the cost of the new lens? Support your answer with details from the story.**

Apollo 11 Lands on the Moon

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

Name _____ Date _____

On May 25, 1961, President John F. Kennedy set a goal for the nation: to land a crew on the Moon and return it to Earth. Apollo 11 launched from Cape Kennedy on July 16, 1969, to complete that goal. It carried Commander Neil Armstrong, Michael Collins and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin. Collins piloted the command module, Columbia, while Armstrong and Aldrin would ride the lunar module, Eagle, down to the surface. The word lunar means “of the Moon.”

On July 20, Eagle separated from Columbia. Armstrong flew part of the landing by hand, steering to avoid a crater near the end, and Eagle touched down in a place called the Sea of Tranquility. Hours later, Armstrong stepped onto the Moon, and about 20 minutes after that, Aldrin followed him. An estimated 650 million people watched Armstrong on television and heard him describe the moment as “one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.”

The two astronauts moved as far as 300 feet from Eagle. Aldrin set up science experiments, and both men gathered samples of the Moon’s surface to bring back to Earth. They left behind a silicon disk holding goodwill messages from 73 countries. Armstrong and Aldrin spent 21 hours, 36 minutes on the Moon’s surface before Eagle carried them back up to Columbia and Collins. On July 24, 1969, Apollo 11 splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, 13 miles from the recovery ship USS Hornet. The goal had been met.

1. **What goal did Apollo 11 complete, and who had set it?**

2. **What does “splashed down” mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **Why does the author begin with President Kennedy’s goal from 1961?**

4. **Collins never walked on the Moon. Was his part still important? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

The 19th Amendment

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

Name _____ Date _____

The 19th Amendment to the Constitution guarantees American women the right to vote, which is also called suffrage. Winning it took decades of difficult struggle, and few of its early supporters lived to see the final victory in 1920. Beginning in the mid-1800s, several generations of supporters lectured, wrote, marched and organized. Some worked state by state, and nine western states had passed laws giving women the vote by 1912. Others challenged male-only voting laws in the courts, and some used picketing, silent vigils and hunger strikes. Opponents heckled them, jailed them and sometimes hurt them.

The amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878. Then New York gave women the vote in 1917, and in 1918 President Wilson changed his position and supported the amendment. The political balance began to shift. In 1919, the House of Representatives and then the Senate passed the amendment. Next it had to be ratified, or approved, by three-fourths of the states. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify it.

The amendment says that the right to vote "shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex." Still, the victory was not complete. African American and other minority women faced decades more of struggle, and many women could not vote until long into the 20th century because of discriminatory state voting laws, laws that treated some groups unfairly.

1. **What is the passage mostly about?**

2. **What does "ratified" mean in the second paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **How did events in 1917 and 1918 help the amendment pass?**

4. **The author says "the victory was not complete." Do you agree? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

The Golden Spike

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

Name _____ Date _____

The transcontinental railroad, a railroad that crossed the continent, was scheduled to be finished on May 8, 1869. David Hewes, a San Francisco contractor, was disappointed that no one had made a special item to celebrate it. So he used $400 of his own gold to have a golden spike cast, or made by pouring melted metal into a mold. The spike was 5 5/8 inches long and weighed 14.03 ounces. Its top was engraved with the words “The Last Spike,” and one side carried a wish for the country’s unity, “as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world.” Nevada sent a silver spike for the ceremony too.

At the ceremony, workers laid a polished tie of California laurelwood, with holes drilled for the special spikes. A tie is the wooden beam that the rails rest on. Leland Stanford, president of the Central Pacific, and Thomas Durant, vice president of the Union Pacific, gently tapped the precious spikes with a silver-plated hammer so as to leave no mark.

Then the precious spikes and the laurelwood tie were removed, and a plain pine tie took their place. A final iron spike and an ordinary hammer were wired to the telegraph line so that the nation could “hear” the blows. Stanford swung and struck the tie instead, and Durant missed the tie completely. At last, a regular rail worker drove the spike home, and the telegrapher sent the message “D-O-N-E.” It was 12:47 p.m. on May 10, 1869.

1. **Why did David Hewes have the golden spike made?**

2. **What does “precious spikes” mean in the second paragraph? What in the passage shows it?**

3. **Why were the final iron spike and its hammer wired to the telegraph line?**

4. **The golden spike says “The Last Spike.” Was it really the last spike? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

Black Sunday and the Dust Bowl



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

Name _____ Date _____

The 1930s were years of terrible hardship on the Great Plains. People there faced the Great Depression and, at the same time, years of drought, a long period with too little rain. Dust storms struck the dry land again and again. People called them dirt storms, sand storms, black blizzards and "dusters." The worst came on Sunday, April 14, 1935, a day known in history as Black Sunday. That day, a mountain of blackness swept across the High Plains and turned a warm, sunny afternoon darker than the darkest night.

The wall of dust first blasted into the eastern Oklahoma panhandle around 4 p.m. Winds in the panhandle reached upwards of 60 mph, and for a short time people could not see their own hand in front of their face. A reporter named Robert E. Geiger was caught by the storm near Boise City, Oklahoma. The next day, his article began, "Residents of the southwestern dust bowl marked up another black duster today…" It was one of the first uses of the name the Dust Bowl.

The blowing dust was blamed not only on dry weather but also on poor soil conservation, the ways farmers protected their soil. In March 1935, Hugh Hammond Bennett, an advisor to President Roosevelt, testified before Congress about the need for better methods. Dust from the Great Plains blew all the way to the East Coast, blotting out the sun even in the nation's capital. Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act before the end of that year.

1. **What was Black Sunday?**

2. **What does "blotting out" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **How did Black Sunday lead to the name "the Dust Bowl"?**

4. **Were the dust storms of the 1930s caused only by nature? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

The James Webb Space Telescope



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

Name _____ Date _____

The James Webb Space Telescope, launched on December 25, 2021, is the largest, most powerful space telescope ever built. It lets scientists look at what our universe was like about 200 million years after the Big Bang. Webb sees the universe in light that is invisible to human eyes. This light is called infrared radiation, and we can feel it as heat. Firefighters use infrared cameras to see people through the smoke of a fire. In a similar way, Webb's infrared cameras can see through dust in space, inside the clouds where stars and planets form. Infrared also helps Webb see the first galaxies, which are so far away that the expansion of the universe has shifted their light from visible to infrared.

Space telescopes use mirrors to collect and focus light, and the bigger the mirror, the more details a telescope can see. But it is very difficult to launch a giant, heavy mirror into space. So engineers gave Webb 18 smaller mirrors that fit together like a puzzle. The mirrors fold up inside the rocket, then unfold to form one large mirror in orbit. A thin layer of gold helps them reflect infrared light.

The whole telescope is as tall as a 3-story building and as long as a tennis court, so it had to fold origami-style to fit inside its rocket. Its cameras are sensitive to heat from the Sun, so Webb has a sunshield about the size of a tennis court. The temperature difference between the sun-facing side and the shaded side is more than 600 degrees Fahrenheit.

1. **What kind of light does Webb see, and why is it useful?**

2. **What does "origami-style" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **Why did engineers give Webb 18 smaller mirrors instead of one large one?**

4. **Why do you think the author compares Webb's cameras to firefighters' cameras? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

Antarctica, a Continent of Ice



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

Name _____ Date _____

Antarctica is Earth's fifth-largest continent; it covers the South Pole and is covered almost completely in ice. It is also the coldest place on Earth. The average temperature there in winter is minus 34.4 degrees Celsius (minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit), and the lowest temperature ever recorded was minus 89.4 degrees Celsius (minus 129 degrees Fahrenheit). Antarctica has just two seasons: six months of daylight in summer, when it is tilted toward the Sun, and six months of darkness in winter, when it is tilted away.

Although Antarctica is so icy, it is considered a desert, because it receives very little rain or snowfall. The small amount of snow that does fall does not melt but builds up over hundreds and thousands of years to form large, thick ice sheets. Antarctica's terrain, the surface of the land, is made up of glaciers, ice shelves and icebergs.

The ice helps scientists in a surprising way. As many meteorites, or rocks that fall from space to Earth, have been found in Antarctica as in the rest of the world combined. Meteorites are easier to see on the white ice, and the ice preserves them for a long time. NASA uses satellites to study how Antarctica's ice is changing. The Ice, Cloud, and Land Elevation Satellite, or ICESat, measures changes in the size of the ice sheets. This matters because melting ice sheets may affect sea levels all over the world, and rising sea level can create dangerous conditions for people living close to the ocean.

1. **Why is Antarctica considered a desert, even though it is covered in ice?**

2. **What does "terrain" mean in the second paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **How does Antarctica's small amount of snow end up forming thick ice sheets?**

4. **Does Antarctica's ice matter to people who live far away from it? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

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.

Plot diagram

Write what happens at each part of the story, from the start to the end.

Name _____ Date _____

Title _____ Author _____

3 Rising action

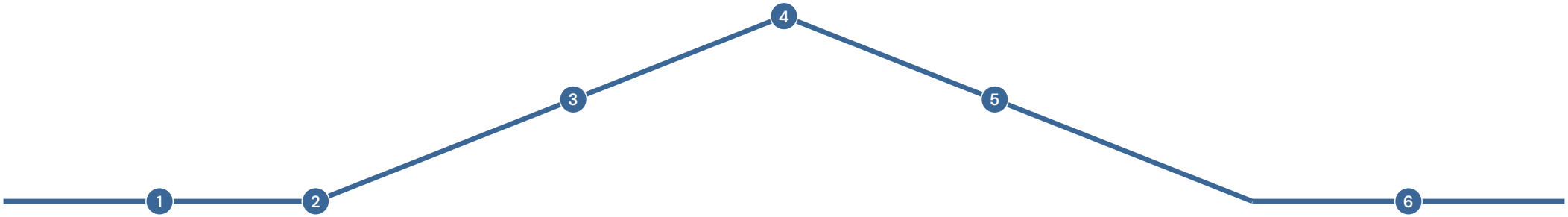
The events that build toward the turning point

4 Climax

The turning point, where the tension is highest

5 Falling action

What happens because of the turning point



1 Exposition

The characters, the setting and how things are at the start

2 Conflict

The problem the main character faces

6 Resolution

How the problem is settled, and how the story ends

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Answer key

The Robot That Kept Tipping Over

1. What is a theme of this story?
   A good leader listens to other people's ideas and lets the best idea win, even when it is not his own.

2. What does "Marcus felt his face grow warm" show about him? What in the paragraph shows it?
   It shows he felt embarrassed. The next sentence says he was the captain, the tall arm had been his idea, and he wanted to insist that he only needed more time.

3. How does Marcus change from the beginning of the story to the end?
   At first he is proud of his own design and keeps trying to fix it. By the end he accepts Rosa's better design and gives her the credit in front of the judge.

4. Was the experiment a good way for the team to choose a design? Support your answer with details from the story.
   Sample answer: Yes. It was fair because both arms got the same ten attempts. It showed clearly that the tall arm toppled over six times while Rosa's arm never fell and earned more points, so nobody could argue about the result.

Answer key

Two Sides of the Story

1. What is a theme of this story?
   Talking honestly with a friend is better than guessing what the friend is thinking.

2. What does “Kayla’s stomach dropped” mean here? What in the paragraph shows it?
   It means she suddenly felt afraid. The next sentence says she was certain Lena would laugh at her.

3. Why did the author tell the story from both girls’ points of view?
   To show that each girl misunderstood the other: Lena thought Kayla had found new friends, but Kayla was really rehearsing her solo alone because she was embarrassed.

4. Was Lena right to go to the band room instead of leaving the note? Support your answer with details from the story.
   Sample answer: Yes. The note said “If you don’t want to be friends anymore, just tell me,” which was based on a wrong guess and could have hurt Kayla. By going to the band room, Lena learned the truth, and the girls ended up closer than before.

Answer key

The Saturday Shift

1. What is a theme of this story?
   Planning ahead can let you keep your promises to your family and still do something you want to do.

2. What does “raised an eyebrow” mean here? What in the paragraph shows it?
   It means she was doubtful. She then asks whether Nadia is sure she can be cheerful at five o’clock.

3. Why did Nadia decide not to simply ask for the day off?
   She imagined her father alone at the register with the line out the door on the busiest day of the week.

4. Was Nadia’s plan fair to her family? Support your answer with details from the story.
   Sample answer: Yes. She came in two hours early, packed forty boxes of dinner rolls before the doors opened and worked all morning without a mistake. Her father thanked her and gave her cinnamon buns, which shows he thought the plan was fair.

Answer key

The Cracked Lens

1. What is a theme of this story?
   Owning up to a mistake, even when nobody saw it, builds trust.

2. What does “examined” mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means looked at closely. The sentence says Mr. Delgado looked carefully, for a long moment.

3. How did Eli’s choice to tell the truth lead to the ending of the story?
   Because Eli told Mr. Delgado before he discovered the crack himself, Mr. Delgado trusted him more. Eli kept his place and photographed the championship game.

4. Was it fair for Eli to pay half the cost of the new lens? Support your answer with details from the story.
   Sample answer: Yes. The camera broke because Eli took off the strap after being reminded twice to keep it on, so part of the cost was his to pay. But someone else bumped his elbow, so it was also fair for the yearbook budget to cover the rest.

Answer key

Apollo 11 Lands on the Moon

1. What goal did Apollo 11 complete, and who had set it?
   To land a crew on the Moon and return it to Earth. President John F. Kennedy set the goal on May 25, 1961.

2. What does “splashed down” mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means the spacecraft came down into the water. The sentence says it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean, 13 miles from a recovery ship.

3. Why does the author begin with President Kennedy’s goal from 1961?
   To show why the mission was planned. The last sentence comes back to the goal to show that Apollo 11 met it.

4. Collins never walked on the Moon. Was his part still important? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: Yes. Collins piloted Columbia, and Eagle had to carry Armstrong and Aldrin back up to Columbia before the crew could return to Earth. Without Collins and Columbia, the goal could not have been met.

Answer key

The 19th Amendment

1. What is the passage mostly about?
   How American women won the right to vote through the 19th Amendment after decades of struggle, and how the victory was not complete for every woman.

2. What does “ratified” mean in the second paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means approved. The words “or approved” right after it explain it.

3. How did events in 1917 and 1918 help the amendment pass?
   New York gave women the vote and President Wilson began to support the amendment, so the political balance began to shift. Congress passed the amendment in 1919.

4. The author says “the victory was not complete.” Do you agree? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: Yes. The amendment said the vote could not be denied on account of sex, but many women still could not vote until long into the 20th century because of discriminatory state voting laws, and African American and other minority women faced decades more of struggle.

Answer key

The Golden Spike

1. Why did David Hewes have the golden spike made?
   He was disappointed that no one had made a special item to celebrate the finishing of the transcontinental railroad.

2. What does “precious spikes” mean in the second paragraph? What in the passage shows it?
   Spikes made of valuable metals. The passage describes a golden spike and a silver spike, and the men tapped them gently so as to leave no mark.

3. Why were the final iron spike and its hammer wired to the telegraph line?
   So that the nation could “hear” the blows as the last spike was driven.

4. The golden spike says “The Last Spike.” Was it really the last spike? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: No. The golden spike was only tapped gently and then removed with the laurelwood tie. The real last spike was an iron spike that a regular rail worker drove into a plain pine tie. The golden spike was a way to celebrate, not a working part of the railroad.

Answer key

Black Sunday and the Dust Bowl

1. What was Black Sunday?
   April 14, 1935, when a mountain of blowing dust swept across the High Plains and turned a sunny afternoon darker than night. It was the worst of the 1930s dust storms.

2. What does "blotting out" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means hiding or covering up. The sentence says so much dust blew to the East Coast that it blotted out the sun.

3. How did Black Sunday lead to the name "the Dust Bowl"?
   A reporter caught in the storm wrote an article the next day about the "southwestern dust bowl." It was one of the first uses of the name.

4. Were the dust storms of the 1930s caused only by nature? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: No. Drought, a natural event, dried out the land, but the dust was also blamed on poor soil conservation, the ways farmers protected their soil. That is why Bennett testified about better methods and Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act.

Answer key

The James Webb Space Telescope

1. What kind of light does Webb see, and why is it useful?
   Infrared light, which human eyes cannot see. It lets Webb see through the dust clouds where stars and planets form, and it lets Webb see the first galaxies.

2. What does "origami-style" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   Folded up neatly, like folded paper. The sentence says the telescope had to fold this way to fit inside its rocket.

3. Why did engineers give Webb 18 smaller mirrors instead of one large one?
   It is very difficult to launch a giant, heavy mirror into space. The smaller mirrors fold up inside the rocket and then unfold to form one large mirror.

4. Why do you think the author compares Webb's cameras to firefighters' cameras? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: The comparison makes a hard idea easy to picture. Readers may know that firefighters' infrared cameras see people through smoke, so they can understand how Webb's infrared cameras see through dust to the places where stars and planets form.

Answer key

Antarctica, a Continent of Ice

1. Why is Antarctica considered a desert, even though it is covered in ice?
   It receives very little rain or snowfall.

2. What does “terrain” mean in the second paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means the surface of the land. The words right after it, “the surface of the land,” explain it.

3. How does Antarctica’s small amount of snow end up forming thick ice sheets?
   The snow that falls does not melt, so it builds up over hundreds and thousands of years.

4. Does Antarctica’s ice matter to people who live far away from it? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: Yes. Melting ice sheets may affect sea levels all over the world, and rising sea level can create dangerous conditions for people living close to the ocean. That is why NASA measures the ice with satellites like ICESat, to see how it is changing.