

Guided Reading

Read this selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

Rock Climbing: Man and Mountain

- 1 When I rock climb, I'm free. To me, rock climbing isn't just exercise; it's an art and a spiritual journey. I climb because I find satisfaction in the movement—it's a dance, and the mountain is my partner. Each time I climb, I have the challenge of adjusting my moves to find the rhythm and style that will fit my partner. Each mountain is also a goal. I visualize myself reaching the summit. I prepare mentally, physically, and emotionally. When I succeed, I feel a tremendous strength and a sense of accomplishment. My mountain climbing successes have taught me that I can approach my life's goals in the same way.
- 2 Climbing has also taught me that there is a difference between good fears and bad fears. Good fears keep you safe and make you double-check what you are doing, while bad fears stop you from doing something that really is safe.
- 3 My name is Joe, and I started rock climbing when I found out that I could do it. I'd walked by the "rock climbing wall" at my gym dozens of times before I even considered trying to climb. Then, one day I heard an instructor say that anyone who can walk up a few flights of stairs without having to rest could rock climb. I was worried that I didn't have enough upper body strength. After my first lesson, though, I learned that my legs would push me up the rocks, and my arms just balanced me.
- 4 Now, my friend Jim and I are fanatic climbers. Last Friday night we drove up to the Catskill Mountains for a Saturday morning hike. We started out just before 5:30. I thought we were making good time up the four-mile trail. We followed a creek with water so clear that it looked like a ribbon of glass, shattering every so often on the sharp rocks in the bed. The gurgling and babbling sounds of the water calmed me. They chanted, "breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out." Before long, the sun was rising in the sky.

ELEMENTS OF LITERARY NONFICTION

This selection is a personal narrative. In this kind of writing, the author shares some personal experiences and tells why they were meaningful. In paragraph 1, the author uses the words "art" and "a spiritual journey" to describe rock climbing. He also compares rock climbing to a dance. These descriptions reflect a very personal view of rock climbing. In paragraph 2, the author shares some lessons he has learned from rock climbing.

TEKS 7

CONTEXT CLUES

If you don't know the word *fanatic* in paragraph 4, look for context clues. Because the author and his friend drive a distance to start a hike at 5:30 in the morning, you can guess that *fanatic* means "eager" or "very enthusiastic."

TEKS 2B

- 5 We were close to reaching the rock face, the "wall" we were going to climb. I was surprised by the steady incline we had to ascend to get to the real climbing spot. We'd already broken a good sweat. Usually, we don't have to work so hard before "really" climbing. I was relieved that some other climbers had left their ropes. Jim and I used them, even though they did not lead straight up to our route. We zigzagged up until we came to a level spot. Jim stumbled up behind me, and when I asked him how he was feeling, he answered by throwing up on my boots. I suggested that we remove our backpacks and sit down and rest for a while. Jim agreed.
- 6 We took a break. Through the silence that wrapped around us, we could hear the birds chattering and the wind whistling a gentle tune. After a few minutes, I told Jim that I understood if he wanted to quit. But being a determined fellow, he shook his head *no* and slung his backpack over his shoulders.
- 7 From the level ground, we scrambled up a dirt crevice until we reached the base of our climb. The gap was dirty and slick. I checked my watch; we had about nine hours of daylight left. I was annoyed that we'd wasted all that time just getting to this spot, so I quickly scaled the first pitch. A pitch is about fifteen feet of climbing. This pitch wasn't too steep, so I didn't bother to put any gear in the rock to help me. I looked over my shoulder for Jim, and, although he looked ghostly, he shimmied up the pitch. Soon we were at the base of the chimney, a wide crack in the rock big enough to fit most of your body.
- 8 As I climbed the chimney, the jagged edges and harsh sandpaper surface scraped my arms and legs. I was glad I was wearing kneepads. Getting out of the chimney and onto the next ledge was tough, so I fixed a rope to a tree and heaved myself up. Panting, I leaned over to catch my breath and wipe the sweat out of my eyes while Jim made his way to the top.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

In paragraph 6, the author describes the setting of his climb using personification, giving human characteristics to the birds and the wind.

TEKS 8**CONTEXT CLUES**

When you come across technical terms that you do not recognize, read further. The author may include a definition or an explanation later in the text. In paragraph 7, the author defines the climbing terms *pitch* and *chimney* soon after their first use.

TEKS 2B

9 The next pitch was steep—in fact, completely vertical—so I pulled out my climbing aids. We were going to have to belay, or assist each other. I secured my ropes through a harness and tied myself in it. I was the lead climber, so I went first. Once I reached the ledge, I helped Jim up the slope.

10 We climbed the next section with protection—solid cams. Camming devices—also called cams or friends—are used mainly to protect the lead climber from falling. A cam has a trigger that allows it to widen to fit into different-sized cracks. I use cams so I can shift my weight onto them while I climb up a steep slope. I moved very slowly to make sure that the cams didn't pull out, and, finally, I made it to the top.

11 When Jim caught up with me, we prepared our camp. First, we made sure that everything, including ourselves, was carefully clipped and secured so nothing would roll away at night. Since I'm bigger than Jim, I decided to sleep on a flat boulder while Jim squeezed in a slot between my boulder and the wall face. Then I allowed myself to feel exhausted.

12 I'd gone for so long without food or water that I was dizzy, but after I forced myself to eat and drink, I revived enough to soak in the warmth of the evening. The stars directly above our heads glinted like gold confetti sprinkled across the dark sky, reminding me of how far we had come and how far we had left to go. Then I slept—even though the boulder was not a comfortable bed.

13 Waking at dawn, Jim and I both felt worn out, but we knew that we had to get climbing if we were going to have any chance of reaching the mountaintop.

ELEMENTS OF LITERARY NONFICTION

In paragraphs 7–9, concrete details, sensory language (words and phrases that appeal to the five senses), and the use of specific climbing terms convey the difficulty of the climb.

TEKS 7, 8

MAKING INFERENCES

When you infer, you combine ideas in the text with your own prior knowledge to draw a conclusion. The author's actions in paragraph 11 tell you that he is cautious and thorough.

Fig. 19D

ELEMENTS OF LITERARY NONFICTION

This last paragraph conveys a message that can be applied to life as well as to rock climbing.

TEKS 7

Use "Rock Climbing: Man and Mountain" (pp. 11–13) to answer questions 1–7.

1 With which idea about rock climbing would the author most likely agree?

- A It can be seen as a metaphor for life.
- B It is a dangerous sport for experts only.
- C It is a very expensive sport.
- D It is simply a fun way to pass the time.

2 Which of the following is an example of a simile?

- F *he looked ghostly*
- G *I revived enough to soak in the warmth of the evening*
- H *the stars directly above our heads glinted like gold confetti*
- J *each mountain is also a goal*

1

3 The author uses figurative language in paragraph 4 mainly to —

- A show readers the obstacles climbers must overcome
- B identify the exact geographical location of the mountain
- C stress how important the first part of a climb is
- D show the author's feeling of closeness to nature

5 Which statement expresses the theme of this personal narrative?

- A Some goals are too difficult to accomplish.
- B It's important to have a hobby that you can do all by yourself.
- C Those things that are hardest to do may be the most rewarding.
- D Sometimes you have to stop and appreciate what you have.

ITEMS 7, 8

4 Which word or phrase from paragraph 7 helps you figure out the meaning of crevice?

- F gap
- G base
- H gear
- J level ground

6 When does a climber need to belay?

- F When ascending an easy slope
- G When attempting a difficult part of the climb
- H When securing the camp for the night
- J When approaching the wall

F

7 How would you describe the organizational structure of this narrative?

- A The details are narrated in strict chronological order, from the beginning to the end.
- B Individual topics related to rock climbing are discussed one at a time.
- C The least important facts about rock climbing are explained first, followed by the more important facts.
- D It begins with some personal thoughts followed by a true story about a particular climb.



Reading Practice

Read this selection. Then answer the questions that follow.

My First Step to the White House

by Chris Van Allsburg

My notes about
what I am reading

Chris Van Allsburg is a writer and illustrator best known for his books Jumanji and The Polar Express. Briefly, while growing up in Michigan, he thought he might become president.

- 1 When I was about nine years old, my father bought me a go-kart. It was fire-engine red and had a chain-saw motor on the back that was a screaming terror.
- 2 My family lived in a neighborhood where there were winding dirt roads, and it wasn't long before I was blasting through turns sideways, kicking up a rooster tail of gravel.
- 3 The roads weren't the only thing that was dirt. So were the driveways. But one morning an asphalt¹ truck pulled up to our house, and by the afternoon our dusty, rutted drive had been transformed into a ribbon of smooth black perfection, the envy of the neighborhood.
- 4 A few days later my mom and dad had to go out for the afternoon. Before they left, my dad reminded me of an agreement that we'd made: I would never, ever, use the kart if he wasn't around. If I did, no more go-kart.
- 5 After my parents left, my friend Steve came over. One thing led to another, and pretty soon we were rolling the kart out of the garage. I figured one little ride wouldn't hurt. Besides, my dad would never know.
- 6 I checked the gas tank on the kart. Empty. We kept the extra gas in a giant ten-gallon army surplus² gas can. Steve and I dragged the full can across the driveway and lifted it up. Unfortunately, it was too heavy

1. **asphalt**: an oily, black substance used to pave driveways and streets.

2. **army surplus**: military goods that are sold when the army no longer needs them.

"My First Step to the White House" by Chris Van Allsburg from *Guys Write for Guys Read* edited by Jon Scieszka. Text copyright © by Chris Van Allsburg. Reprinted by permission of the author.

for us. We ended up pouring one gallon into the cart and about nine gallons onto the driveway.

My notes about
what I am reading

- 7 Do you know what happens to fresh asphalt when gasoline gets on it? Neither did I. It turns into a gooey black muck and sort of melts away. Steve and I stared at the crater³ in my driveway like it was a chemistry experiment gone very wrong.
- 8 I knew I was in big trouble. Not only had I broken my promise about not using the go-kart, I'd also messed up our brand-new driveway. I felt so bad; I just rolled the kart back into the garage.
- 9 I waited for my parents to come home, feeling worse every minute. Finally, they pulled into the driveway and parked right over the hole. They hadn't noticed it. Was I lucky!
- 10 I knew when my dad discovered the hole, he'd ask me about it. I'd just blame it on the car. Everybody knows cars leak gas, right?
- 11 My mom fixed dinner, but I didn't have much of an appetite. In fact, I was starting to feel pretty bad. The idea of waiting until someone discovered the hole and then lying about it was too much for me. I couldn't take it. Before we had dessert, I dragged my dad out to the driveway and confessed. I think I may have started crying a little bit, too. My dad moved the car and looked at the hole. "Well," he said, "that's not too bad. Let's go back in and have some ice cream."
- 12 My dad did end up taking the kart away, but only for a few weeks. When I went to my room that night I felt pretty lucky. Lying in bed, I realized I'd heard about this sort of thing happening before. I'm sure you have heard the story, too. It's called "Parson Weems' Fable," and it tells how young George Washington cut down a cherry tree. When his father discovered the fallen tree, George said, "I cannot tell a lie, father, I did it with my little hatchet."
- 13 George escaped the worse punishment he might have gotten, because he'd told the truth. "Golly," I thought, "I just did that myself!" I fell asleep wondering if one day I'd be president, too.

3. crater: a large pit or hole.

Use "My First Step to the White House" (pp. 57–58) to answer questions 1–7.

- 1 What is the author's main purpose in writing this autobiographical account?
 - A To pay tribute to his father
 - B To describe a memorable experience that helped teach him a lesson
 - C To explain the dangers of pouring gasoline on fresh asphalt
 - D To teach readers the difference between right and wrong

- 2 Based on the images in paragraph 2, what can you guess about the author's activities after he got his go-kart?
 - F He was afraid to use it and drove it slowly.
 - G He sped around for a while but soon lost interest in it.
 - H He drove it quickly and with great enthusiasm.
 - J He made chicken noises as he drove around in it.

- 3 Which type of figurative language does the author use when he describes the newly paved driveway as "a ribbon of smooth black perfection" (paragraph 3)?
 - A Simile
 - B Personification
 - C Hyperbole
 - D Refrain

- 4 Based on the context clues in paragraph 3, what does the word transform mean?
 - F Change
 - G Drive
 - H Make jealous
 - J Stay the same

- 5 Paragraphs 12 and 13 make an allusion, or brief reference, to a well-known legend about George Washington. What lesson do both Washington and the young Van Allsburg learn?
 - A Honesty is the best policy.
 - B Violence is never the answer.
 - C Children often misbehave when their parents are away.
 - D Anyone can grow up to be president.

- 6 What is the main difference between the young boy who spills the gasoline and the older man who tells the story years later?
 - F The older man is less honest with himself.
 - G The older man is more daring and adventurous.
 - H The older man knows the story of George Washington.
 - J The older man sees the humor in the situation.

- 7 Think about the structure of this autobiographical account. What role does the title play?
 - A It stresses the author's political ambitions.
 - B It identifies the subject of the first paragraph.
 - C It shows that the writer wants to be taken very seriously.
 - D It makes the reader curious until the end, when it is explained.



