



▶ Practice Skills for LEAP 21: English Language Arts, Grade 8 Student Worksheets

Reaching For Results



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Reading and Responding

Read this story about a girl whose family is moving from a city to a small town. Then answer the questions. You may look back at the story as often as you like.

A Story with a Surprise Ending

by Leslie Hall

Once upon a time, there was a family who lived happily in a city far, far away. . . .

When we, my brother and I, were little, our parents used to tell us bedtime stories every night. The bedtime stories my mom and dad used to tell always started with *Once upon a time* and ended with *happily ever after*. Right now I don't care so much about the *Once upon a time*, but I would like to see some *happily ever after*.

After the *Once upon a time*, would come the unsuspecting main character, who might be a prince, a princess, or even just a normal person. The main character was always a good person who suddenly got stuck with a big problem: a dragon, the hardhearted old king, a moat as deep as the ocean, or a wall as tall as the sky. The main character would undergo a series of troubles, which the character eventually overcame, and then would face the big problem with courage, compassion, or ingenuity. With the help of a wise old lady, a special word, or the knowledge he had learned from triumphing over the troubles, the main character would climb the wall, swim the moat, or otherwise overcome the big and final problem, and the story would end happily ever after.

In this story, the big problem is not a dragon or a hardhearted old king. In this story, the big problem will not be solved by saying a special word.

In this story, the problem is how pizza boxes are manufactured in a small town far, far away, across the river, over the mountains, and beyond the plains. There is a factory in that small town, a factory that makes boxes. In the factory are many boxes, boxes of every size and shape.

Someone at the factory decided it would be cheaper or faster to make pizza boxes a different way. There was nothing wrong with the old pizza boxes. There was, however, something wrong with the new pizza boxes. It may have been cheaper or faster to make the pizza boxes the new way, but it wasn't smarter. People who bought the pizzas packed in the new pizza boxes were unhappily surprised to discover that, by the time they got their pizzas home (or by the time their pizzas were delivered), the pizza boxes fell apart. After containing hot pizzas for more than a few minutes, the boxes became soggy and floppy and fell apart. The pizzas got cold, and the people who bought the pizzas became angry.

This is where we come in. To show us the problem, our dad shows us letters from angry customers who ended up with cold pizzas.

Our father works for the company that bought the factory that makes the boxes that fall apart. Our father is a packaging engineer. He can fold paper into beautiful designs; he can take a piece of the newspaper and make something so beautiful you'd hang it on the wall. Our father's company wants him to go to the factory in the small town and figure out what's wrong with the new pizza boxes.

No one says anything.

“I’m sorry,” our dad says, and he looks at all of us. “I know you don’t want to leave.” Even though he is sad that we are sad, we can tell that he is happy, too. There is nothing our dad likes more than a big problem to figure out.

In this story, the mother, the girl, and the boy have to leave their beloved home in the city and travel to a small town far, far away, across the river, over the mountains, and beyond the plains so that the father can watch how pizza boxes are made and figure out how to make them better. The mother is not happy to leave her job, but she makes the best of it. Our mother tends to be optimistic.

“I always wanted to live in a small town,” she says. “And the raise will be nice.”

I have never wanted to live in a small town, but I don’t want to make my dad feel worse, so I don’t say anything.

In this story, the father tells the girl and the boy all of the facts he has learned about the small town that is far, far away, across the river, over the mountains, and beyond the plains. The small town is close to a mountain range where there are caves to explore. There is a river nearby where they can go rafting. The high school in the small town has an Olympic-sized swimming pool. In the winter, there is usually snow, which means sledding and skiing and snow days.

In this story, the mother finds a new job in the small town that she thinks she will like even better than her old job. “Time for something new,” our mom says.

In this story, the parents take the girl and the boy on a journey, and they leave the city and travel to the small town that is far, far away, across the river, over the mountains, and beyond the plains. The girl is charmed by the horses to ride and the farms to visit and the people who live in the town, who are kind and cheerful even if they are not good at making pizza boxes. The boy is pleased by the mountains to climb and the new house with a large basement that will become his room. The mother is eager to start a new job and is happy that she will be able to walk to and from work instead of sitting in the car and stewing in traffic for an hour each way.

The father is looking forward to solving the problem of the pizza boxes that fall apart. A thorough examination of the boxes leads him to suspect that the culprit may be low-quality glue or the thin cardboard, but he can’t be sure until he investigates further.

I guess “happily ever after” is as good an ending as any. If you can think of a better one, let me know.

Lesson 1

Reading and Responding: “A Story with a Surprise Ending”

1. Which of these proverbs **best** describes the theme of the story?
 - A. He who hesitates is lost.
 - B. Every cloud has a silver lining.
 - C. A rolling stone gathers no moss.
 - D. A penny saved is a penny earned.

2. Which of these sentences supports the narrator’s idea that her mother is optimistic?
 - A. The mother dislikes being delayed by traffic.
 - B. The mother prefers walking to work to driving.
 - C. The mother is reluctant to leave their old home.
 - D. The mother is looking forward to trying a new job.

Lesson 2

Reading and Responding: “A Story with a Surprise Ending”

1. How does the father in the story feel about his transfer?
 - A. overjoyed, because he will receive a salary increase
 - B. eager, because he thinks it will make his wife happy
 - C. calm, because he knows the new town has good schools
 - D. pleased, because he loves having a new problem to solve

2. What is the “surprise ending” of this story?
 - A. The mother easily obtains a new job.
 - B. The brother learns to climb mountains.
 - C. The narrator realizes that she actually likes the new town.
 - D. The father discovers a new packaging method for pizza.

Lesson 3

Reading and Responding: “A Story with a Surprise Ending”

1. Read this sentence from the story.

The main character would undergo a series of troubles, which the character eventually overcame, and then would face the big problem with courage, compassion, or ingenuity.

In this sentence, “ingenuity” is closest in meaning to

- A. insistence
 - B. persistence
 - C. eagerness
 - D. inventiveness
2. In the chart below write **one** way “A Story with a Surprise Ending” is similar to a fairy tale and **one** way “A Story with a Surprise Ending” is different from a fairy tale.

	SIMILARITY	DIFFERENCE
How “A Story with a Surprise Ending” is similar to and different from a fairy tale:		

Reading and Responding

The poem “The Road Not Taken” is set during a walk in the woods. Read the poem. Then answer the questions.

The Road Not Taken

—Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

8 Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, from *Mountain Interval*. ©1916 by Henry Holt and Company. Used by permission.

Lesson 4

Reading and Responding: “The Road Not Taken”

1. The poet writes, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, / and sorry I could not travel both . . .” What does the word “diverged” mean?
 - A. appeared
 - B. curved
 - C. branched off
 - D. continued on

2. The two roads might symbolize
 - A. different ways out of the woods.
 - B. different ways to return home.
 - C. different ways to get to town.
 - D. different choices in life.

Lesson 5

Reading and Responding: “The Road Not Taken”

1. Which feature of the selection most strongly indicates that it is a poem?
 - A. It appeals to the senses.
 - B. It is divided into lines and stanzas.
 - C. It has a title.
 - D. It is told in first person.

2. What does “grassy and wanted wear” in the 8th line of the poem mean?
 - A. Many people had walked the grassy road.
 - B. The grass needed cutting.
 - C. Not many people had walked this road.
 - D. The grass was too high for anyone to walk through it.

Reading and Responding

Read this story about a girl who visits Canada. Then answer the questions. You may look back at the story as often as you like.

Niagara Falls

Passing a digital sign that first displayed the current temperature and then the time, Sara shook her head. “Twenty-five degrees? That can’t be right,” she thought. The sun was setting, and was beginning to dip behind the skyscrapers that lined the unfamiliar streets. Even though it was sunset, it certainly wasn’t at all cold. Twenty-five degrees! She glanced up at the sign again. The temperature was still the same: 25° C.

“Of course! Celsius!” It all made sense. Quickening her pace, she caught up with her family. “Dad?” she asked, “How do you convert from Celsius to Fahrenheit?”

“Multiply by nine fifths, and add thirty-two,” he said without hesitation and without slowing down. No matter what the question, her father always seemed to know the answer.

“So,” she thought, “if it’s twenty-five degrees, I multiply that by nine...that’s...two hundred and...uh...twenty five. Divided by five is...five and twenty...then another twenty...so...forty-five, plus thirty-two is...seventy-seven.” She wasn’t so bad with numbers herself.

For the first time, Sara was in another country. She and her family were visiting Niagara Falls, Ontario. Even though it was Canada, a section of which stood just across the river from the United States, traveling was still exciting. Crossing the border had felt symbolic and meaningful to Sara. She figured that there would be many cultural and other differences to make her feel like she was in another country. She took note of every difference, no matter how small. She wanted to remember everything—how the street lamps were of a different shape and size than the ones back home, that the sidewalks were a tiny bit wider, money was completely different (bills were so brilliantly colored that Sara had trouble thinking of them as money), and now she knew that temperature was measured in Celsius degrees.

The waterfalls produced a low rumbling that could be heard clearly throughout the city. The rumbling sounded like a train in the distance, getting closer and closer, until Niagara Falls stretched out before them. Sara watched a boat full of tourists wearing bright yellow parkas slowly bobbing toward the waterfalls, approaching the torrents of water from below. Another group of tourists, clustered around a guide like so many ducklings, milled closer to get a better view. Sara sidled over in order to eavesdrop. The guide’s voice was so perky and practiced she sounded like a tape recording.

“The first person to go over Niagara Falls sealed in a barrel was Mrs. Annie Edison Taylor,” said the guide. “She performed this feat on October the 24th in 1901. At the time, Mrs. Taylor was sixty-four years old. She risked everything in the hope of acquiring fame and fortune as a result of her daring escapade, but unfortunately, her plan was unsuccessful, and she died a poor woman. Since then, there have been less than a dozen people who have...”

Sara’s grandmother was sixty-four. Sara tried to picture her poised, elegant grandmother sealed in a rickety wooden barrel and careening over Niagara Falls. She burst out laughing.

Rejoining her family, Sara cast her vote for a restaurant that overlooked the view of rushing water over the massive cliffs. Sara was briefly disappointed at the familiarity of the menu. Ordering a grilled cheese sandwich, she thought she might as well be at home. Canada wasn’t nearly as different from home as she had expected. Even if they *did* give the temperature in Celsius. Just then, a crowd of people entered the restaurant, laughing and talking in French, and it made Sara think that there were just enough differences to keep things interesting.

Lesson 8

Reading and Responding: “Niagara Falls”

1. The writer most likely uses dialogue in this story
 - A. to give the reader background information.
 - B. to describe the sequence of events.
 - C. to predict a future event in the story.
 - D. to make the characters seem more alive.

2. Sara’s father is **best** described as
 - A. confusing.
 - B. generous.
 - C. adventurous.
 - D. knowledgeable.

Lesson 9

Reading and Responding: “Niagara Falls”

1. Which statement about information from the story is a fact?
 - A. Math is used to convert Celsius to Fahrenheit.
 - B. Sara’s grandmother is poised and elegant.
 - C. Canada is very different from the Unites States.
 - D. It is funny to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

2. In paragraph 6, “slowly bobbing toward the waterfalls, approaching the torrents of water from below,” what does *torrents* mean?
 - A. depth
 - B. pool
 - C. drops
 - D. rush

Reading and Responding

Read this story about students who go to other countries to live and study. Then answer the questions. You may look back at the story as often as you like.

From Here to There: Becoming a Foreign Exchange Student

Holly had never traveled more than 100 miles from her home in Oklahoma when she applied to be a foreign exchange student to Brazil. Her hands were shaking when she came home one day to find an envelope bearing the return address of the exchange program. She had been accepted as an exchange student to Brazil. A sophomore in high school, Holly was thrilled and a little scared to know that she was going to spend a whole year, her junior year, in another country. Holly didn't speak Portuguese, the official language of Brazil. She didn't even know anyone who had ever been to Brazil. Fortunately, she had two months to get ready. She started a study program, checking out Portuguese language tapes and books about Brazil from her library.

Gabriel looked out the airplane window. He couldn't believe he was on his way to the United States from his native Argentina. He was going to live a whole new life. Born and raised in Buenos Aires, one of the busiest cities in South America, Gabriel was going to Lincoln, Nebraska. Gabriel was an only child, but he was going to live with an American family that had six children. Used to city sights and sounds, Gabriel would be living on a ranch where sheep and cattle were raised and everyone knew how to ride a horse. Learning English was going to be easy, Gabriel thought. He had already studied English for several years. He wasn't sure about learning how to ride a horse!

Every year, thousands of students all over the world participate in student exchange programs such as AFS Intercultural Programs (formerly known as American Field Service), Rotary Youth Exchange, and Youth for Understanding. With the goal of promoting understanding among people all over the world, these nonprofit programs offer students an opportunity to study and live in another country for a certain period of time. Some programs last only a few weeks, but there are also programs that last a summer, a semester, or even a year.

Students who have studied abroad report that being an exchange student is an overwhelmingly positive experience. The opportunity to live in another country, staying with a family and attending school, means a chance to learn about the country and the culture in ways you would never experience as a tourist. Learning another language is an extra benefit. Many former exchange students never lose their love of travel. They go on to look for opportunities to travel throughout their lives, even choosing careers that will take them all around the world.

Lesson 11

Reading and Responding: “From Here to There”

1. In the first paragraph, why were Holly’s hands shaking?
 - A. She was nervous about learning Portuguese.
 - B. She knew she was going to another country.
 - C. She was considering applying to an exchange program.
 - D. She was about to find out whether she had been accepted to the program.

2. How are Holly’s and Gabriel’s experiences similar?
 - A. They both had to learn a new language quickly.
 - B. They both were used to living in cities.
 - C. They both were excited about living abroad.
 - D. They both had two months to get ready.

Lesson 12

Reading and Responding: “From Here to There”

1. In paragraph 4, what does overwhelmingly mean?
 - A. slightly.
 - B. somewhat.
 - C. largely.
 - D. extremely.

2. The writer of this passage most likely believes
 - A. there are too many exchange programs.
 - B. Holly will not be ready to go in two months.
 - C. Buenos Aires is the best place to travel.
 - D. there are many rewards to traveling abroad.

Reading and Responding

Read the following poem, and then answer the questions.

We, the People, Reply

- 1 They said this, they said that.
They said it all, thinking they spoke for us.
- 2 “No,” said the ladies.
“No,” said the gentleman.
“No,” we said, and we all spoke together,
in one voice.
- 3 They said, “The ladies have been invited to listen,
the ladies have been invited to learn,
but—
the ladies have *not* been invited to speak.”
- 4 Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton
shook their heads and laughed out loud.
“Not for ourselves alone!” the ladies replied,
as they tirelessly swept away the dust
of old ideas, pushing the country forward
into a future in which the ladies imagined they might
own their own land
cast their own votes
speak their own minds.
- 5 They said, “Yes, you can be educated.
Yes, you have a right to learn.
But—
not in the same place.
Not in the same way.
Not by the same teachers. Let it be
separate but equal.”
- 6 Thurgood Marshall shook his head, smiling
to himself. “Equal means
getting the same thing,
at the same time, and
in the same place,” he replied,
as he marched into battle, armed with a
briefcase and sheaves of legal papers, papers
foretelling the futures of generations.
- 7 “No,” the people said,
we said, and we all spoke together,
in one voice.

Lesson 15

Reading and Responding: “We, the People, Reply”

1. To whom does “They” refer in this poem?
 - A. the ladies
 - B. the gentleman
 - C. civil rights activists
 - D. past lawmakers

2. What do Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton discuss in this poem?
 - A. individual rights
 - B. abolition of slavery
 - C. equality in education
 - D. the democratic process

Lesson 16

Reading and Responding: “We, the People, Reply”

1. Which phrase from the poem contains an example of metaphor?
 - A. They said it all, thinking they spoke for us.
 - B. “Not for ourselves alone!” the ladies replied,
 - C. as they tirelessly swept away the dust/of old ideas
 - D. Thurgood Marshall shook his head, smiling.

2. The **main** purpose of printing the word *not* in italic type in this poem is to
 - A. indicate where new lines begin.
 - B. highlight what should be read aloud.
 - C. identify where the speakers change.
 - D. suggest what to read with emphasis.

Reading and Responding

Read the following essay, and then answer the questions.

An Uncommon Appointment

When Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark retired in 1967, rumors flew through Washington, D.C. Who would President Lyndon B. Johnson appoint to replace Justice Clark? Because the Supreme Court has the responsibility and power to interpret and put in place laws for the United States, the matter was of national importance.

There were many qualified candidates throughout the country. In the days leading up to Justice Clark's retirement, one candidate in particular began to hope and dream. His name was Thurgood Marshall.

3 No ordinary lawyer, Thurgood Marshall was already the Solicitor General of the United States. His career as a civil rights lawyer had been impressive. He had argued many cases before the Supreme Court, and had won most of them. Racial integration was a cause that was special to Thurgood Marshall. He had taken the landmark case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* to the Supreme Court. *Brown vs. the Board of Education* had to do with integrating public schools. The Supreme Court had agreed with Thurgood Marshall that public schools should be integrated.

Thurgood Marshall did not believe in the idea of "separate but equal." He believed strongly that integration was the way to peace between the races in the United States. Marshall had grown up in an integrated neighborhood in Baltimore, Maryland. He had lived and worked among people of different races. His family had encouraged him to do his best. His father had always taught him to stand up for himself. Thurgood Marshall learned these lessons of his childhood well. These lessons served Marshall well throughout his life.

Even when Thurgood Marshall was hoping to be a Supreme Court justice, he knew he would not be willing to give up his own beliefs. He would stay true to his beliefs, even if that meant he would not be appointed. Marshall told President Johnson that he would always act as he thought best. He also told President Johnson that he might sometimes disagree with the president. President Johnson was glad to hear that Thurgood Marshall would be independent. Still, Marshall did not feel sure that he was President Johnson's first choice for the job.

6 When President Johnson told Thurgood Marshall that he would be on the Supreme Court, Marshall was so surprised that he could hardly speak. He was the first African American to serve on the Supreme Court. Marshall had worked hard for civil rights for all of his life. His own great-grandfather, Thorney Marshall, had been born a slave. Now Thurgood Marshall was one of the most powerful men in the country.

Lesson 18

Reading and Responding: “An Uncommon Appointment”

1. Paragraph 3 states, “He had taken the landmark case of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* to the Supreme Court.” What does landmark mean in this sentence?
 - A. enormous
 - B. illegal
 - C. historic
 - D. confusing

2. Which statement is an opinion?
 - A. “Supreme Court Justice Tom Clark retired in 1967.” (paragraph 1)
 - B. “Thurgood Marshall’s great-grandfather had been born a slave.” (paragraph 6)
 - C. “Marshall’s career as a civil rights lawyer had been impressive.” (paragraph 3)
 - D. “President Johnson appointed Marshall to the Supreme Court.” (paragraph 6)

Lesson 19

Reading and Responding: “An Uncommon Appointment”

1. Thurgood Marshall thought that he might not be appointed to the Supreme Court because he
 - A. had grown up in an integrated neighborhood.
 - B. had been a civil rights lawyer.
 - C. was encouraged by his parents to do his best.
 - D. planned to stay true to his beliefs.

2. Which **best** describes the writer’s feelings toward Thurgood Marshall?
 - A. relief
 - B. surprise
 - C. admiration
 - D. disappointment

