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Nonfiction

Strange, but True

Something very strange happened one day. The year was 1968. It was a cloudy day in southern England. Rain began to fall. The rain was red! All over southern England people looked at the rain. They could not believe their eyes. Could they really be seeing red rain? Could such a strange thing truly be coming down from the sky?

After a time, the red rain stopped. It dried up. The red rain was gone, but grit was left behind. Grit is like dust. It is small bits of stone or sand. The grit was red. Scientists examined the grit. They looked at it carefully. By examining the grit, the scientists could tell where it came from.

The grit was from the Sahara Desert. The Sahara Desert was far away. It is in Africa! The dust had been carried by the wind. It had blown far. It had blown all the way to England. When the rain fell, the water mixed with the dust. The dust colored the rain and made it red.

Fiction

Too Strange To Be True

Will saw an odd creature. He saw a strange, bizarre creature. The strange creature was purple with orange dots. It had three eyes and five feet. It had a straw for a mouth. It did not have a nose. Will told his brother about the bizarre thing he had seen.

Will's brother said, "I don't believe you. Your story is too strange to be true. You are making it up, Will. You must stop doing that. If you keep making things up, no one will believe you when you tell the truth."

Just then the doorbell rang. Will's brother opened the door. An alien was at the door! The alien was purple. It was covered in orange dots. It had three eyes and five feet. It had a straw for a mouth. It did not have a nose.

"Hello," said the alien. "I am from far away. I am from Mars. I flew in on a spaceship. Please tell me something, Mr. Earthling. Tell me why you look so odd."

Practice 7 – Questions

Directions: Fill in the bubble next to each correct answer.

1. **Where did the red rain fall?**

   Ⓐ in Africa
   Ⓑ in England
   Ⓒ in the desert
   Ⓓ in the Sahara

2. **Both stories are about**

   Ⓐ strange colors.
   Ⓑ what cannot be true.
   Ⓒ odd creatures from the sky.
   Ⓓ seeing hard-to-believe things.

3. **If something is bizarre, it is**

   Ⓐ odd.
   Ⓑ grit.
   Ⓒ an alien.
   Ⓓ a creature.

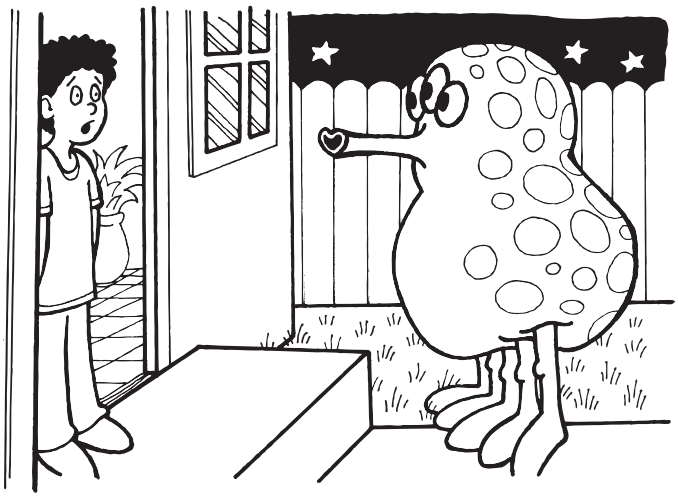
4. **Fill in the chart to show how the alien is different from you.**

	number of 	number of 	number of 
you			
alien			

5. **Look at the picture to the right. Which story does it show?**

   Ⓐ “Strange, but True”

   Ⓑ “Too Strange To Be True”



Nonfiction

Made for the Desert

One scientist studied desert plants. The scientist dug up a small cactus plant. The scientist dug up the plant's roots, too. The scientist found that the cactus had lots of roots. Many of the roots were shallow. They were close to the surface. They were not deep. The roots spread in every direction. Some of them were over 30 to 40 feet (10 to 13 m) long!

Why were the roots so shallow? Why did they spread in every direction? Why did they spread so far? Plants need water. Without water, plants cannot grow. Plants collect water through their roots. A desert is dry. There is little rain. The little rain does not soak far into the ground.

A cactus's roots help it collect water. The shallow roots soak up water close to the surface. It soaks up the rain that does not soak far into the ground. The long roots cover a wide area. They soak up rainwater that falls far away from the plant.

Fiction

The Shrinking Plant

Jan said, "Plants grow. They get bigger. I have a mystery plant. The plant is a type of cactus. It is a mystery plant because of how it grows. Sometimes it seems to shrink! Its stem seems to get smaller. Deep grooves appear on its surface. How is it possible for a plant to shrink? What is going on?"

Jan asked a botanist. A botanist is a scientist. A botanist studies plants. The botanist told Jan, "Cacti are desert plants. There is not a lot of water in the desert. It does not rain often. When it rains, cacti soak up water. They collect more than they can use. They store the water.

"Look at your cactus. See its ribs. Its ribs run up and down its stem. When it is dry, the stem shrinks. There are deep grooves between each rib. When there is water, your cactus collects the water. It stores it in its stem. The stored water causes the stem to expand. It expands like a balloon filled with air. The grooves between the ribs become flatter."

Directions: Fill in the bubble next to each correct answer.

1. **The scientist who dug up the cactus roots did not find roots that**

   Ⓐ were long.
   Ⓑ were deep.
   Ⓒ spread far.
   Ⓓ spread in every direction.

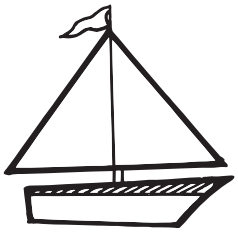
2. **A cactus stem shrinks**

   Ⓐ as it expands.
   Ⓑ as it collects water.
   Ⓒ as it is filled with water.
   Ⓓ as it uses up the water it has stored.

3. **It is very likely that Jan's mystery plant**

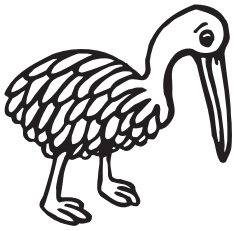
   Ⓐ had deep roots.
   Ⓑ did not have long roots.
   Ⓒ had roots that grew close to the surface.
   Ⓓ did not have roots that spread in all directions.

4. **Which of these would a botanist would most likely study?**

Ⓐ 

Ⓑ 

Ⓒ 

Ⓓ 

5. **Look at the picture to the right. Which story does it show?**

   Ⓐ "Made for the Desert"

   Ⓑ "The Shrinking Plant"