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Introduction

If a student read either one of these excerpts out of context, it is likely that the student would have a difficult time knowing which one was fiction and which was nonfiction. In addition, the student would have no idea how the two excerpts could be tied together.

If, on the other hand, the student read these excerpts in context and understood how they fit into an entire passage, the student would be able to answer with confidence that, as strange as it may seem, one motorcycle racer did indeed need over 200 wooden splinters removed from his body because racing tracks were once constructed out of unsanded boards. The student would then be able to compare, contrast, or tie this fact to a fictitious passage where the derivation of the nickname “hogs” for motorcycles comes up when two students are discussing how they will get home from school. (Both passages deal with early motorcycles.)

Many state tests now contain assessment sections that include paired passages. After reading two passages, students are expected to differentiate between fiction and nonfiction passages. They are expected to see how the two are connected and understand the underlying connection, as well as how they are dissimilar. They are asked to demonstrate their understanding of the passages by answering multiple-choice questions and providing written responses.

This multileveled task draws on many aspects of the reading and writing processes. The Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills Kit was created to provide practice with this type of exercise and assessment, including:

- Exercises that build reading comprehension
- Exercises that develop the skills needed to break down and analyze story elements
- Exercises that provide practice in keeping sequence and details from two sources separate
- Exercises that provide practice in proper letter formation, spacing, and spelling
- Practice with multiple-choice questions
- Practice with written-response questions on individual passage themes
- Practice with written-response questions that utilize information from two contrasting passages
Using the *Paired Passages* Kit

The Kit Contains:

**The Passages**

There are 25 units in *Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills*. Each individual unit contains two high-interest passages. The first passage is nonfiction. The second is fiction. Each passage is written at grade level with appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. The passages are tied together with a common theme. Unit subjects run the gamut from men with sky-blue noses to a city where firefighters rarely put out fires.

The units may be done sequentially, but they do not have to be. A teacher may choose to go out of order or pick specific units at different times because of class interest or an individual student’s needs. Units may be done as a class or assigned as individual work.

The passages can be found on the cards, in the guide, or in the enhanced e-book. They can be used with small groups for guided reading, pair-share activities, at centers, or independently by students. The option of reproducing the passages for each student gives teachers other opportunities, such as assigning meaningful homework activities for students.

**The Multiple-Choice Questions**

For each set of passages, there are multiple-choice questions. These are found directly following each set of passages. The answers are also conveniently located after each set of questions.

The first question focuses on the nonfiction passage. The second question focuses on the fiction passage. Answer choices for these questions come only from the passage the question stems refer to.

The third multiple-choice question asks what both passages have in common.

The fourth question requires the student to differentiate between the passages and understand what topic is covered in each one, as the answer choices are drawn from both passages.

Students can answer multiple-choice questions on the page by filling in the circle of the correct answer. Students can also answer multiple-choice questions by filling in the answer sheet located on page 9 of this book. Using this answer sheet provides practice responding in a standardized-test format.
Written Responses

A page requiring written responses is part of each unit. The first two written responses vary depending on the unit. They may require sequencing of events by filling in boxes, making lists, or even drawing a picture. Each response deals with only one of the passages. They are written to provide students with a foundation of sorting and organizing information. They provide exercise in referring back to the text and keeping two different pieces of literary prose separate in the reader's mind.

The last three written responses require higher-level responses. First, the students are asked to write out the main theme of each passage with complete sentences. Lastly, they are asked to respond to a question that requires thinking about or using information from both passages to answer.

A teacher’s expectations of what constitutes a satisfactory response on these last questions may change over the year, or it may vary depending on the level of the student. For example, at the beginning of the year or with some students, a teacher may accept phonetic spelling and lack of punctuation. As specific topics are covered in class and students become more mature, a teacher may begin to check spelling, capitalization, ending punctuation, etc. Enough variation allows that all students, even those struggling in grade-level writing skills or those with advanced writing skills, can participate.

The Teacher Resource Book

This guide provides:

1. copies of all the stories and questions.
2. correlations to Common Core State Standards.
3. practice answer sheets.
4. individual answer keys for each set of passages.

Use this guide to make copies of the questions for students. The questions can help assess students’ understanding of what they are reading. The enhanced e-book version of this guide can be used on an interactive whiteboard with an entire class, on individual computers, or to make copies directly from a computer.
Each passage and question in *Paired Passages: Comprehension & Critical Thinking Skills* meets one or more of the following Common Core State Standards. (© Copyright 2010. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.) For more information about the Common Core State Standards, go to [http://www.corestandards.org/](http://www.corestandards.org/).

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<td><strong>Key Ideas and Details</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Standard 1</strong>: RL.7.1. Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.</td>
<td>all passages</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 2</strong>: RL.7.2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.</td>
<td>all passages</td>
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<td><strong>Craft and Structure</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Standard 4</strong>: RL.7.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.</td>
<td>all passages</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Integration of Knowledge and Ideas</strong></td>
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| **Standard 9**: RL.7.9. Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history. | The Last Man/A Pace Too Slow  
A Genuine Hoax/The Counterfeit Painting  
To the Pole/From Where We're Going  
A Short History of the Match/  
A Native-American Fire Tale  
The Escape Artist/The Charlatan  
One-Handed Rescue/When the Goal Is Survival  
A Different Type of Bank/The Vehicle of Life  
Two Early Motorcycle Racers/Hog Ride  
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### Informational Text Standards

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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 2:</strong> RI.7.2. Determine two or more central ideas in a text and analyze their development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.</td>
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<td><strong>Standard 3:</strong> RI.7.3. Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).</td>
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<th>Craft and Structure</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Standard 4:</strong> RI.7.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.</td>
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<th>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</th>
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<td><strong>Standard 10:</strong> RI.7.10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 6–8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.</td>
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When Harry Houdini went to Berlin, Germany, he was taken to police headquarters. There, with 300 police officers observing, all of his clothes were removed, and he was examined carefully. The police were looking for a tiny tool or key that Houdini might have hidden. After carefully examining his hair, mouth, ears, and between his toes, the police taped Houdini’s mouth shut and locked his arms behind his back. Police thumbscrews, finger locks, handcuffs, and leg irons were all used. Then, Houdini was wrapped in a blanket and put on an examining table.

Houdini escaped in just six minutes. The police were astonished. They were also upset. They issued a statement that said, “At this time, we are unable to explain the way in which the locks are opened and remain undamaged.”

Houdini was born in 1874 and died in 1926. His success as an escape artist came in part due to his strict training. Houdini never stopped studying locks. He took them apart and put them back together time after time. He exercised relentlessly, developing powerful muscles. Though born right-handed, he forced himself to use his left hand until he could use it as well as his right. He trained his toes until they were as strong and dexterous as most people’s fingers.

Part of Houdini’s fame lay in his secret techniques for escape. Yet there came a time when Houdini freely revealed some of his secrets. In 1917, the United States declared war against Germany. Told he was too old to enlist, Houdini volunteered to teach. He taught soldiers how to escape from German-made handcuffs, open locked doors, untangle ropes, and breathe underwater.
“I’ll be there waiting for you.” At these words, everyone in the room burst out laughing.

“No,” said the prison warden, “I don’t think you will be, Leonardo. These walls are solid brick, and as you can plainly see, there are no windows, ducts, or vent openings. No one will be able to get in to help you.

“You’re going to regret your rash boasting,” continued the warden with a determined and steely glint in his eye. “I’m going to prove once and for all that you’re nothing but a sneaky charlatan. When my men close this door, you’ll be left with your arms chained behind your back and your feet shackled in irons and bound with tightly knotted rope. Altogether, there are 17 different locks on your restraints, each impossible to cut through or pick. When we return from lunch, you’ll be here waiting.”

As the door of the cell swung shut, the prison warden said firmly, “Today is the day that we will have indisputable proof that this guy is nothing but a trickster. We’ll free him when we return from the restaurant.”

Exactly seven minutes later the warden and all his men strolled into the restaurant where they had arranged a press conference over lunch. They gasped in disbelief and astonishment when they saw Leonardo. “I’m ready to eat,” Leonardo announced with an impish grin.

Later that evening, Leonardo was watching the news with his brother Terrence. “They’re calling me the escape artist of the century,” said Leonardo.

Terrence turned his identical face to Leonardo and said in his identical voice, “Next time, you get the cell.”
Show What You Know (cont.)

6. List five things Houdini did that helped him develop into an escape artist.
   a. studied locks
   b. took locks apart and put back together
   c. exercised relentlessly
   d. forced himself to use both hands
   e. trained his toes

7. Fill in the chart with information about what the brothers were doing at different parts of the story.

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<td>in restaurant waiting or hiding very close to</td>
<td>speaking to prison warden</td>
<td>watching news with brother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrence</td>
<td>in cell</td>
<td>getting out while prison warden was in the restaurant</td>
<td>watching news with brother</td>
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Write three or more sentences that tell what each story is about.

8. “The Escape Artist”
   Accept well-supported answers of three or more sentences in length.

   Accept well-supported answers of three or more sentences in length.

10. Do you think Leonardo and Terrence were any less of escape artists than Houdini? Write one or more paragraphs telling why or why not. Make sure you discuss training in your answer. (Use a separate piece of paper.)