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Name _____

Read the chapter from this fictitious autobiography and answer the questions on the following pages.

*An excerpt from the fictitious autobiography of NASA scientist Jake Gilligan.***Chapter Three**

October 1957

I had been waiting outside of Finley's Electronics for over an hour—determined to get a good position. With my nose pressed against the glass, I watched the launch of *Sputnik* on seven different televisions. She looked so beautiful when all of the engines were fired up, launching her into the sky and Earth's orbit.

I was so excited after the launch that I rode straight over and met up with Dave and Gerry. We rode to the Fairfield Library and borrowed the only two books we could find about rockets. We passed them around the table, looking at the photographs and diagrams in amazement.

Before I had even realized what I was saying, I had announced to the gang that we were going to build a rocket. Of course, the boys were skeptical, saying that our fathers would think it was a waste of time, and the kids at school would tease us. The boys were right, but as I said to them, none of us was ever going to get noticed in this town by being big football stars, so why not try and build a rocket instead?

We decided that Gerry's basement would be the perfect location to build a rocket, so we took the books down there. Luckily, Gerry's dad was out playing a round of golf, so we didn't have to explain our plans. We could all imagine what our fathers would say . . .

"You are just wasting your time building rockets. Do you actually think you will leave Fairfield and become a rocket scientist? I don't think so. Go outside and play football instead."

That week, we spoke to Miss Warner, the science teacher, and told her about our project. She was very excited and gave us a leaflet about the state science competition that was being held in December. We now had a deadline! Whenever we could get away, we would meet in Gerry's basement and discuss and design our rocket. We started to collect materials and tools, and soon after, we were sawing or sanding away. I would also ride over to my Uncle Stan's mechanic shop whenever we needed parts welded together.

By the third of December we were finished! We walked up to the hills behind the town, looking for a launch site and found a flat area that was perfect. We also discovered a piece of discarded steel that we could use for protection in case our rocket decided to fly sideways instead of up!

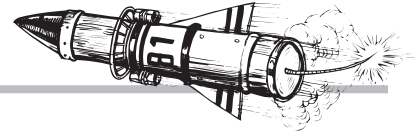
Gerry, Dave, and I chose a long fuse for our first rocket. I lit it and we ran behind the steel, peering out over the top.

Our first launch. We counted down together . . .

"10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 . . . Blast off!"



THE ROCKET BUILDER



Literal

Find the answers directly in the text.

Read each sentence. Decide if each statement is **True** or **False**.

- 1. According to the text, Jake Gilligan became a rocket scientist at NASA. True False
- 2. *Sputnik* was launched into Earth's orbit in October 1967. True False
- 3. The Fairfield Library had many books about building rockets. True False
- 4. The boys wanted to be noticed, so they built a rocket. True False
- 5. Jake believed his dad would tell him to play football instead of building rockets. True False
- 6. Miss Warner was the boys' English teacher. True False

Inferential

Think about what the text says.

1. In 1957, Jake Gilligan watched the launch of *Sputnik* on television through a store window. What is the most likely reason he didn't watch it at home?

2. Why do you think the Fairfield Library only had two books about rockets?

3. Why was a flat area ideal for launching the rocket?

4. List words or phrases to describe how you think the boys were feeling when:

a. they were in Gerry's basement, building their rocket.

b. they were crouched behind the steel as the fuse burnt down to ignite their rocket.

THE ROCKET BUILDER

Applied

Use what you know about the text and your own experience.

1. Even though the boys knew their fathers would be unhappy about them wasting their time building a rocket, they went ahead and built one. Why do you think this is?

2. What do you think the kids at school thought about Dave, Gerry, and Jake after they heard about the rocket the boys had built?

3. Write about a time when you were so excited about doing something that you didn't care what others would think of you.



THE ROCKET BUILDER

Predicting

Use the text on page 15 to complete the following activity. The launch was a success! The boys ran back to town and told everyone who would listen about their rocket.

1. Predict what each person would say about the boys and their rocket.

Miss Warner:

Journalist for the *Fairfield Times* newspaper:

Jake's father:

Judge at the state science competition:

2. a. The text shows just one chapter of Jake Gilligan's autobiography. With a partner, discuss what you think the other chapters in the autobiography would be about. Write three questions that you would like answered about Jake Gilligan's life. List them below.

- _____
- _____
- _____

b. Choose one question above. Discuss with a partner what you think the answer might be. Write the answer you agreed upon below.

3. It is the year 2050, and you are writing your own autobiography. How will your life story be similar to or different from Jake Gilligan's autobiography? Make notes below.

Comparing

Similar	Different