

**SPECTRUM®**

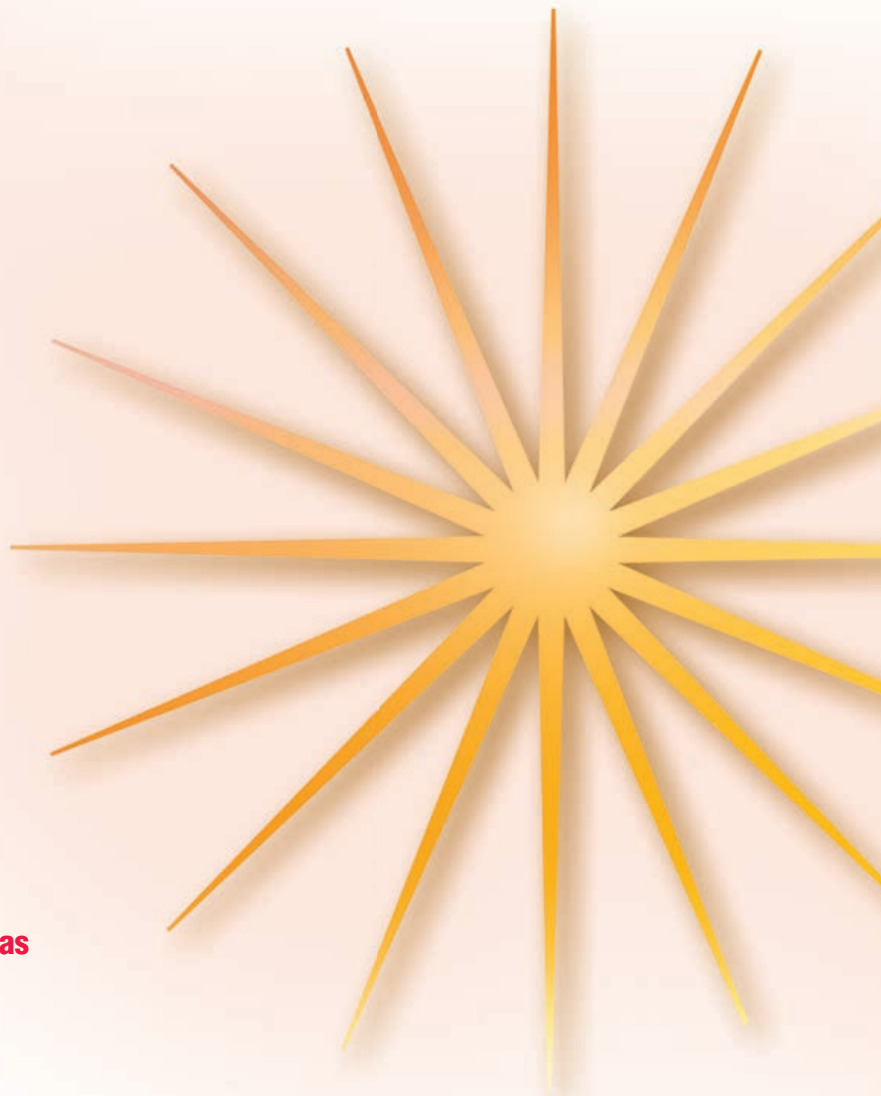
# Reading

**GRADE  
6**



## **Focused Practice for Reading Comprehension**

- Fiction and non-fiction passages
- Story structure
- Integration of knowledge and ideas
- Key ideas and details
- Answer key



*Have you ever been to a baseball game in another country or watched one on television?*

<sup>1</sup> Alex and Emily Godfrey had been in Japan with their parents for nearly a week. They were there to visit their mother's old college roommate, who had moved to Japan after college to teach English. She had planned to come home after a few years, but she had fallen in love with the country and with the man who would eventually be her husband.

<sup>2</sup> "What's our plan for the afternoon?" asked Alex after lunch one day.

<sup>3</sup> "Well," said Mr. Ito, "we have tickets for a 4:00 baseball game. How does that sound?"

<sup>4</sup> "I had no idea baseball was popular in Japan," replied Alex.

<sup>5</sup> "Dad takes us to professional games a few times a year at home," said Emily. "Alex and I keep a list of cities we've visited where we have had a chance to go to a game. I had no idea that Tokyo would ever be on our list!"

<sup>6</sup> The Itos and the Godfreys prepared for the afternoon's events. Just a few hours later, they found themselves standing inside the stadium among a crowd of excited fans.

<sup>7</sup> "What are the names of the teams that are playing today?" asked Alex, looking around curiously.

<sup>8</sup> "The home team is the Yakult Swallows. They will be playing the Hiroshima Toyo Carp," said Mrs. Ito. "Baseball isn't my cup of tea, but this promises to be a good game."

<sup>9</sup> The two families found their seats in the bleachers. Alex and Emily grinned as they listened to all the noisemakers around them. Some people were hitting together plastic bats, and others were yelling through megaphones that looked as though they had been hinged together.

<sup>10</sup> "Are those cheerleaders?" asked Emily. She was referring to a group of men on the ball field who led the crowd in chants and cheers.

<sup>11</sup> Mrs. Ito nodded, "I forget that Americans don't have cheerleaders for baseball games. It also probably seems unusual that they're all men. That's just one of the differences between American and Japanese baseball culture."

<sup>12</sup> Once the game began, Emily and Alex became quickly engrossed. The game itself didn't seem much different at all from the American baseball games they had attended. They were surprised, though, to see people waving American flags from time to time.

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Ito explained, "Japanese teams are each allowed to have three foreign players. When American players come up to bat, their fans show support by waving your country's flag."

<sup>14</sup> In between innings, Mrs. Ito bought Alex and Emily a snack. Some vendors sold pretzels, popcorn, and hot dogs, but Alex and Emily decided to try one of the Japanese alternatives. With Mrs. Ito's help, they selected *yakisoba*, noodles flavored with ginger and soy sauce.

<sup>15</sup> At the end of the game, the Godfreys and the Itos piled back into the car to head home. Alex and Emily were tired, but their minds were racing with all they had seen that day.

<sup>16</sup> "Did you have a good day, kids?" asked Mrs. Godfrey, turning to Alex and Emily.

<sup>17</sup> They nodded. "I wish we could go to JBall games at home, too," said Emily. "After today, I have a feeling that American baseball may never be quite as interesting again."

1. Why were the Godfreys in Japan?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What do you think Emily meant when she said, "American baseball may never be quite as interesting again"?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. What is one way American and Japanese baseball are similar? What is one way they are different?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you think that Alex and Emily will go to another JBall game if they have a chance? Why or why not?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Circle the word that best completes each sentence.

5. Alex and Emily decide to try food that they would not be \_\_\_\_\_ to find at an American game.

allowed   likely   impressed

6. The Godfreys are \_\_\_\_\_ to learn how American and Japanese baseball are different.

curious   refusing   apprehensive

7. Noisemakers are a popular \_\_\_\_\_ at Japanese baseball games.

explanation   resource   custom

An **idiom** is a group of words that has a special meaning. For example, the idiom *hit the hay* means *to go to bed*. Write the idiom from paragraph 8 on the line next to its meaning.

8. something of interest; something a person enjoys \_\_\_\_\_

9. Would you enjoy attending a sporting event in another country? Explain why or why not.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Who is Sadahara Oh, and why is he so famous in the world of baseball?*

<sup>1</sup> What could be more American than baseball? It was one of the earliest sports played in America, created during the mid-1800s. But the Japanese have been playing for nearly as long. In fact, baseball's popularity in Japan rivals its popularity here in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> In the early 1870s, Horace Wilson, an American professor living in Tokyo, introduced baseball to his students. They loved it, calling the game *yakyu*, which means *field ball*. It quickly caught on with students all over the country. Japanese leaders also embraced baseball because they thought that it contained elements that were already part of Japanese culture. For instance, baseball's focus on the mental competition between pitcher and hitter was similar to the one-on-one competitions of martial arts.

<sup>3</sup> By the early 1900s, amateur baseball leagues had been established in secondary schools and colleges throughout Japan. To this day, the enthusiasm for college baseball in Japan is equivalent to the excitement people have for college football or college basketball's March Madness in the United States.

<sup>4</sup> To make baseball even more popular, American teams regularly toured Japan in the early 1900s and played exhibition games against the local amateurs. Top American baseball stars like Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig came to Japan in the 1930s and played against the top Japanese college teams. The Americans won all 17 games they played, but baseball fever swept the whole country. A professional Japanese baseball league was formed in 1936. The Great Tokyo baseball club—known today as the Yomiuri Giants—was the first team, but it was soon joined by six others.

<sup>5</sup> Like so many other things around the world, World War II interrupted Japanese baseball when almost all of the players became soldiers. After the war, the United States occupied Japan. The military commanders who were in charge recognized that baseball was an important part of Japanese culture, so they encouraged the professional teams to reform and continue playing. By 1955, with the help of television, professional baseball in Japan became bigger than ever.

<sup>6</sup> The Yomiuri Giants are not just the oldest pro team in Japan; they may also be the greatest. From 1965 through 1973, the Giants won nine consecutive national championships, partly because of the legendary player Sadahara Oh. The surname *Oh* means *king*, and he certainly was the king of baseball in Japan. Among his many incredible statistics, Oh holds the world record for career home runs—868! That is more than Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Mark McGuire, Barry Bonds, and Sammy Sosa.

<sup>7</sup> Japanese professional players have also come to the United States and played in Major League Baseball, setting records here as well. Current players include the New York Yankees' Ichiro Suzuki. In 2004, Suzuki broke a baseball record for hitting that had stood for more than 80 years! Kazuhiro Sasaki, who played for the Seattle Mariners, was named the American League Rookie of the Year in 2000, and Hideo Nomo of the Los Angeles Dodgers was MLB's 1995 Rookie of the Year.



- 1.** Check the sentence that best states the main idea of the passage.

\_\_\_\_\_ Although baseball is thought of as an American sport, there are many fans and talented players of Japanese baseball, or *yakyu*.

\_\_\_\_\_ American teams toured Japan in the early 1900s and played exhibition games against the local amateurs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Horace Wilson brought baseball to Japan in the 1870s.

- 2.** Number the events below to show the order in which they happened.

\_\_\_\_\_ Horace Wilson introduced baseball to his students.

\_\_\_\_\_ World War II interrupted Japanese baseball.

\_\_\_\_\_ The Giants won nine consecutive national championships.

\_\_\_\_\_ Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig played baseball in Japan.

- 3.** Check the phrase that best describes the author's purpose.

\_\_\_\_\_ to inform

\_\_\_\_\_ to entertain

\_\_\_\_\_ to persuade

- 4.** Why is Sadahara Oh's last name so appropriate?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 5.** Why did Japan's leaders like baseball?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 6.** What is the literal meaning of *yakyu* in Japanese?

\_\_\_\_\_

- 7.** During World War II, many of the players became \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Experimental Appetites

*What kinds of foods from other cultures have you tried?*

<sup>1</sup> Alex and Emily sat at a table with their parents and Mr. and Mrs. Ito. Alex loved to try new foods. Alex had eaten at Asian restaurants at home several times, but he was sure that the meals he'd eat in Japan would be much more authentic.

<sup>2</sup> Emily wasn't as confident as Alex was about trying new foods. Alex would eat practically anything and not think twice about it. Emily liked to be able to identify everything on her plate. She was willing to try new things, but she lacked Alex's enthusiasm for experimenting with new foods.

<sup>3</sup> "Have you looked at the menu yet?" asked Alex and Emily's dad.

<sup>4</sup> "Dad, it's in Japanese," said Alex.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Godfrey grinned. "That shouldn't stop you from looking at it," he said. "Maybe Mrs. Ito can give us some suggestions."

<sup>6</sup> "Of course I can," she said, scanning the menu. "I thought we could start off with some sushi. Do you like fish?" she asked Alex and Emily.

<sup>7</sup> "I do," replied Alex promptly.

<sup>8</sup> Emily looked uncertainly at her parents. "I like some kinds of fish," she said.

<sup>9</sup> "She likes fish that doesn't have a strong fishy taste to it," added her mom helpfully.

<sup>10</sup> "We'll order several different kinds," decided Mrs. Ito. "Then, you'll have a chance to sample them and decide what you like." Mrs. Ito gave their order to the waiter. Then, she turned back to Alex and Emily.

<sup>11</sup> "Do you know how sushi is made?" Mrs. Ito asked Alex and Emily. They shook their heads. "Well, the sushi chef begins with a very thin sheet of seaweed."

<sup>12</sup> "We're going to eat seaweed?" asked Alex excitedly.

<sup>13</sup> Mr. Ito smiled. "You wouldn't even know it was seaweed if we didn't tell you," he said.

<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Ito continued, "The chef spreads a layer of sticky rice over the seaweed. Then, he adds different vegetables and fish. He rolls everything up inside the seaweed and slices it into little disks."

<sup>15</sup> A few minutes later, the waiter returned with a wooden board that held several different types of sushi.

<sup>16</sup> "You might want to try this kind first," Mr. Ito told Emily. "It has cucumber and avocado in it but no fish." The Itos showed the Godfreys how to pick up the sushi using chopsticks.

<sup>17</sup> "What's this?" asked Alex, pointing to a small mound of something green.

<sup>18</sup> "Sushi is often served with pickled ginger and a very spicy condiment called wasabi. The green stuff you were asking about is the wasabi. If you decide to try some, you'll probably want to use a very small amount at first."

<sup>19</sup> No one at the table was surprised to learn that Alex loved the sushi. He even found that he liked wasabi, as long as he was careful to use only a small speck of it on each bite.

<sup>20</sup> "What do you think, Emily?" asked Mrs. Godfrey after a few moments.

<sup>21</sup> Emily picked up another piece of sushi with her chopsticks. "I love it," she said. "I think we're going to need to find a restaurant at home that serves sushi," she added.

<sup>22</sup> Mr. and Mrs. Godfrey laughed. "Our kids are turning into very well-seasoned eaters!" said Mr. Godfrey.



A fact is something that is known to be true. An opinion is what a person believes. It may or may not be true. Write **F** before the sentences that are facts. Write **O** before the sentences that are opinions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Sushi is delicious.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ The chef spreads a layer of sticky rice over the sheet of seaweed.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Wasabi ruins the flavor of sushi.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Mrs. Ito makes some suggestions about what to order.
5. Check the line beside the word or words that best describe what type of passage this is.  
\_\_\_\_\_ informational text  
\_\_\_\_\_ fiction  
\_\_\_\_\_ tall tale

6. How are Alex and Emily different?

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7. Why isn't everyone surprised that Alex likes sushi?

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8. What holds everything together in a roll of sushi?

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9. What is *wasabi*?

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10. Why does Mr. Godfrey say, "Our kids are turning into some very well-seasoned eaters"?

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# Bonsai

*Have you ever seen miniature trees, or bonsai, at a nursery or a botanic garden?*

<sup>1</sup> In Japan, the word *bonsai* means *tray plant*. It refers to the interesting combination of art and cultivation of miniature trees and plants. Bonsai originated in China more than 2,000 years ago. The tradition spread to Japan about 700 years ago, and it is still popular there today.

<sup>2</sup> Some people believe that small, or dwarf, plants must be used in bonsai, but this is not true. Nearly any type of tree or plant can be used, as long as it is grown from a seed or small cutting. The owner must then prune, trim, and shape the plant as it grows so that it resembles, in miniature, a much larger tree. He or she must do this skillfully, however, because the plant must appear to have grown naturally, untouched by humans. It takes a great deal of care and patience to achieve this balance.

<sup>3</sup> A bonsai is more than just a plant. It holds a special and significant place in Japanese culture. According to Japanese tradition, three elements are necessary to create a successful bonsai: truth, goodness, and beauty. When these three elements come together, a bonsai can live for hundreds of years! It may be passed down from one generation of a family to the next as a prized possession.

<sup>4</sup> In Japan, bonsais are grown in containers outdoors but are brought into the home for special occasions. Inside, they are often placed in the *tokonoma*. This is a small area in traditional Japanese rooms intended for the display of artistic objects. In a Japanese garden, other items may be added to the bonsai. The addition of rocks, small buildings, and miniature people is called *bon-kei*. *Sai-kei* is a related art form in which entire landscapes are reproduced in miniature.

<sup>5</sup> There are five basic styles of bonsai: the formal upright, informal upright, slanting, cascade, and semi-cascade. In the formal upright, the trunk of the tree should be perfectly straight, and the branches should be balanced. In the informal upright, the trunk should bend slightly to one side, but never toward the viewer. The trunk of a slanting tree leans to one side and may look similar to the informal upright.

<sup>6</sup> Cascade and semi-cascade are similar because in both styles the leaves and the branches cascade down toward the base of the plant. The main difference is that in the cascade style, the leaves actually extend below the bottom of the container.

<sup>7</sup> If you are interested in raising a bonsai of your own, there is no need to go all the way to Japan to find one. Today, bonsais are available in nurseries all over the United States. You will have to do a little research to make sure that you know how to properly care for your plant. You will also need to be prepared to spend time caring for your plant. But as any bonsai owner will tell you, your efforts are well worth the reward of being a part of this time-honored Asian tradition.





Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. the process of growing and caring for something

\_\_\_\_\_

2. to trim away the unwanted parts of a tree or bush

\_\_\_\_\_

3. copied; made again

\_\_\_\_\_

Write **T** before the sentences that are true. Write **F** before the sentences that are false.

4. \_\_\_\_ The tradition of raising bonsais was begun in Europe.

5. \_\_\_\_ Japanese bonsais are usually grown in containers outdoors.

6. \_\_\_\_ The owner of a bonsai must spend some time caring for the plant.

7. \_\_\_\_ There are three basic styles of bonsai.

8. What do you think the phrase *time-honored tradition* means?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. What are the three elements needed to create a successful bonsai?

\_\_\_\_\_

10. How are the cascade and semi-cascade styles of bonsai similar?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What purpose would a reader have for reading this selection?

\_\_\_\_ for pleasure or entertainment

\_\_\_\_ for information

\_\_\_\_ to form an opinion about bonsais

# A Schoolyard Garden

*What are your favorite fruits and vegetables?*

<sup>1</sup> Have you ever eaten something that you grew in your own garden? Many people have not had the pleasure of this experience. Alice Waters, the owner of Chez Panisse Restaurant, set out to change all that for a special group of students at Martin Luther King Junior Middle School in Berkeley, California.

<sup>2</sup> Waters worked with the school's principal, Neil Smith, to create a cooking and gardening program at the school. Waters believes in the importance of people knowing where their food comes from. She also believes that there is a strong relationship between food, health, and the environment. Her goal at the middle school was to show children the pleasure in gardening and in preparing the foods that they cultivated. She wanted to teach them that a healthy body and a healthy environment go hand in hand.

<sup>3</sup> The project that Waters began took a lot of time and patience. She relied on the help of teachers, students, and community volunteers to turn an asphalt parking lot into a garden. At the same time, renovation was begun to turn an old, unused cafeteria into a kitchen where students could prepare foods and share meals with their teachers.

<sup>4</sup> In the 1995–1996 school year, the first usable crops were planted. They included greens such as arugula and mustard, as well as lettuce, kale, bok choy, carrots, turnips, beets, and potatoes. The following year brought the addition of plants such as citrus trees, apples, plums, black currants, hazelnuts, figs, raspberries, runner beans, and hibiscus. Every year since then, new crops are added and old crops are evaluated to make sure that they are best suited for the environment and the needs of the school.

<sup>5</sup> Students have found that they look forward to the time they spend in the

garden each week. They have learned how to weed, prune, and harvest. They have learned about the life cycles of various plants. They also know how to enrich the soil through composting, a process in which leftover scraps of fruits and vegetables are used as fertilizer. Many have discovered that they like fruits and vegetables that they had never before been willing to try.

<sup>6</sup> Alice Waters dreams that one day there will be a garden in every school in the United States. She hopes that school lunches can be prepared using the produce from the gardens and other locally-grown organic produce. If you are interested in learning more about Martin Luther King Junior Middle School's Edible Schoolyard, seeing pictures of the students and their garden, and finding out about how to start a garden at your school, visit [www.edibleschoolyard.org](http://www.edibleschoolyard.org).



1. What is *composting*?

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2. Name four fruits or vegetables that are grown in the Edible Schoolyard.

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3. Do you think that other schools will create gardens based on Alice Waters's ideas? Why?

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4. Check the sentence that best states the **main idea** of the selection, or tells what the passage is mostly about.

\_\_\_\_\_ Alice Waters owns Chez Panisse Restaurant in California.

\_\_\_\_\_ Students look forward to the time they spend gardening each week.

\_\_\_\_\_ Alice Waters founded the Edible Schoolyard, a program in which students learn to grow and prepare their own foods.

5. Check the words that describe Alice Waters.

\_\_\_\_\_ generous

\_\_\_\_\_ unfriendly

\_\_\_\_\_ talented

\_\_\_\_\_ ambitious

\_\_\_\_\_ stingy

Write the idiom from paragraph 2 on the line next to its meaning.

6. goes together \_\_\_\_\_

7. Why does Alice Waters believe that students should know how to cook and garden?

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8. Do you have a school garden at your school? If so, what do you grow there? If not, what could you do to help start one?

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