

Middle School (6-8) Text-based Informational Writing Prompts

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IntelliMetric® Prompts

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Breaking Barriers"

Carefully read "Breaking Barriers." Then write a multi-paragraph essay in which you summarize the article. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the article to support your response.

Breaking Barriers

In recent years, Venus and Serena Williams have dominated professional women's tennis. Tiger Woods has dominated professional golf. All three of these champions are of African-American descent. But not that long ago, all three would have been banned from professional sports because of their color. These famous athletes owe at least a small debt of gratitude to a remarkable woman named Althea Gibson for breaking racial barriers in professional sports. She was the first African American to play professional tennis or professional golf in the United States -- and she played them both!

Althea Gibson was born in 1927 in Silver, South Carolina. Her parents, Daniel and Annie Gibson, worked on a farm. They decided to move their family to New York City when Althea was three years old. She grew up in Harlem in the 1930s, during the Great Depression. As a girl, Althea loved to play basketball and other sports with the boys in her neighborhood. Because of her fantastic athletic ability, Althea was a diamond in the rough. During the summer of 1941, Althea won a paddle ball tournament in Harlem. One of the people who watched her play suggested that she should try her hand at tennis -- so she did.

In the 1940s, Althea Gibson began taking tennis lessons and winning tennis tournaments. From 1947 onward, she won ten straight national championships of the all-black American Tennis Association (ATA). But she was prohibited from playing in the all-white tennis events held by the U.S. Lawn Tennis Association (USLTA).

For several years, many athletes lobbied for Althea Gibson, including tennis champion Alice Marble. Finally, on August 28, 1950, Ms. Gibson was allowed to play in the U.S. National Championship at Forest Hills in New York. She was the first African American to compete in that or any other USLTA event. That year she won her first match against Barbara Knapp of England but lost to her next opponent in the second round.

Althea Gibson continued to dominate ATA tournaments for several years and began playing in more USLTA events. In 1955-56, she traveled to Asia playing tennis on the Goodwill Tour put on by the U.S. government. When she returned for the 1956 season, she won 16 USLTA matches. She also won the French championship, defeating England's Angela Mortimer in the finals. With that victory, she became the first African American to win a major title in singles tennis.

In 1957, Gibson made sports history by winning the All-England Tennis Championships at Wimbledon. When she returned from England, New Yorkers welcomed her with a parade and the Medallion of the City. Soon afterward she won the U.S. National Championship and became the top-ranked tennis player in the world. Gibson was the first African-American woman to win both of these

championships. She was chosen Female Athlete of the Year by the Associated Press. In the following year she won both tournaments again. Then she decided to retire from tennis.

Althea Gibson was a marvelous athlete and had become a celebrity at age 31, but she was just getting started. In 1958 she wrote her autobiography, *I Always Wanted to Be Somebody*. In 1959 she made a record album, *Althea Gibson Sings*, and appeared in a movie called *The Horse Soldiers*. In 1960 she traveled with the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team -- until she decided to take up professional golf. In 1964 she joined the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) and became the first African-American woman to play in an LPGA event. In a seven-year career, she played in 171 golf tournaments, winning one of them.

In later years, Althea Gibson worked as a tennis teacher and as the athletic commissioner for the state of New Jersey. She was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1971 and the International Women's Sports Hall of Fame in 1980.

Perhaps more important than her many awards, however, was what she achieved as a pioneer in sports. In her remarkable career, she broke many barriers that had prevented people of color from competing in both amateur and professional sports. Her achievements helped to pave the way for many outstanding athletes who have followed in her footsteps, including Arthur Ashe, Zina Garrison, the Williams sisters, and Tiger Woods. Many people of all colors mourned the passing of Althea Gibson in September 2003. She was 76.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Cassowary: Giant Bird of the Rainforest"

Carefully read "Cassowary: Giant Bird of the Rainforest." Then write a multi-paragraph essay in which you summarize the article. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the article to support your response.

Cassowary: Giant Bird of the Rainforest

Strange Bird

The cassowary is surely one of the world's strangest creatures. It is a flightless bird, often more than five feet tall. It lives in the rainforests of Australia and Papua New Guinea. Its large body is covered with hair-like feathers that resemble a glossy black cape. Its bare legs are thick and sturdy. Each foot has three long toes with strong, sharp claws used for fighting. In contrast to its dark body, the cassowary's neck and head are a brilliant blue, adorned with bright red wattles and topped by a tall, bony crown. It is the crown that gives the cassowary its name, which comes from the Papuan words "kasu" (horned) and "weri" (head).

Cassowaries eat rainforest fruits. For the most part, cassowaries lead solitary lives. The adult female lays several clutches of large eggs each year, but the male alone incubates the eggs and takes care of the young. Cassowary eggs are a beautiful pale green, about 5 1/2 inches long. The father bird sits on the nest for 48 to 50 days. When the chicks hatch, they follow the adult male everywhere. He teaches them how to find food and water. He is very protective of them for several months until they are ready to survive on their own.

Although the cassowary seems quite unusual, it has several close relatives. All are members of a group of flightless birds known as ratites. This group includes the kiwi of New Zealand, the ostrich of Africa, the emu of Australia, and the rhea of South America. Several other members of the group are now extinct, including the magnificent giant moa of New Zealand. Giant moas grew as tall as 10 feet. The largest bird living today is the ostrich, which is 6 to 8 feet in height.

The Cassowary's Future

The cassowary is in danger of becoming extinct in Australia. The main reason is habitat destruction. Much of the rainforest that the cassowary depends on for food and shelter is disappearing. People have cut down much of Australia's rainforest for farming, leaving fewer and fewer places for cassowaries to live. Pigs and dogs are also invading cassowary country, competing for food and killing the young. Even small shifts in the kinds of plants that grow in an area can make it impossible for cassowaries to live there. This is because cassowaries depend on up to 150 different plants in order to have food throughout the year.

Plants also need cassowaries. Losing cassowaries from Australia's rainforest would mean losing some of its plants, too. More than 100 plants depend on the cassowary to spread their seeds. Where there are no more cassowaries, these plants are likely to die out.

The cassowary's beautiful rainforest environment is worth protecting. It is truly an interdependent web of life. For this reason, some people in Australia are working hard to protect both cassowaries and their habitat.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 9 – Grades 6, 7

Compare and Contrast Space and Oceanic Exploration

Having read, viewed, and discussed different aspects of space and oceanic exploration, write an informational essay about the topic to be sent to your state senator. Be sure that the essay thoroughly covers the similarities and differences between the two forms of exploration.

In a multi-paragraph informative/explanatory essay, compare and contrast space and oceanic exploration for your state senator. Remember to include and cite key details and facts from your sources that clearly elaborate on the two forms of exploration.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Compare and Contrast the Panama Canal and Great Wall of China

Carefully read “The Panama Canal” and watch the "Deconstructing History: Great Wall of China" video. They describe very different construction projects. After examining the ideas conveyed in each, write a multi-paragraph, informative essay in which you compare and contrast the purpose behind each structure and the challenges builders faced during their construction. Include facts and details from the text and video to support your writing.

Passage One: The Panama Canal

Before the construction of the Panama Canal, ships sailing between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans had to go around the tip of South America - a trip of several thousand miles. There was no way to travel through the American continent to get from one ocean to the other. The voyage around South America generally took three weeks or more and was quite dangerous. Many ships sank or wrecked in the treacherous waters around Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America.

Spanish kings first began to think about building a canal across the Isthmus of Panama as early as the 1500s. They wanted an easier route to bring treasure from the West to ships in the Caribbean Sea, and then across the Atlantic to Spain. It was not until 1880, however, that a French company began work on such a canal.

The French stopped work on the canal several times as they ran into problems. Lack of money, intense heat and terrible rains, diseases that killed thousands of workers, and rugged geography made digging the canal extremely difficult. Workers had to blast through the mountains of the continental divide and cross the large Chagres River. After nearly 20 years of work, the French effort failed when the company went bankrupt.

In 1904, the United States stepped in to complete the canal. The Americans' initial interest in the canal was for use by the military so that Navy ships could move quickly from one ocean to the other. After ten years of hard work, the canal finally opened on August 15, 1914. It cost over six hundred million dollars to build and employed a total of 80,000 workers, both French and American. Of those workers, over 30,000 died during the construction. With the building of the canal, ships could travel between the Atlantic and the Pacific in as little as eight hours.

The United States controlled the canal and the land around it, called the "Canal Zone," until 1999, but many people in Panama resented the U.S. presence. They felt that they should have more control of the canal and a greater share of the money that came from canal tolls. They also did not like having such a large American military presence in their country. After much struggle and pressure from other countries, the United States began to negotiate to give control of the Canal Zone to Panama. The government withdrew troops and closed military bases. On December 31, 1999, the United States officially gave control of the canal and the land around it to the government of Panama.

Today, ships from more than 70 countries use the canal, though the United States still uses it most. Ships passing through the canal each year carry millions of tons of cargo and pay hundreds of millions of dollars in tolls. Some amazing technology has been developed in the past 100 years, but the Panama Canal remains one of the greatest engineering marvels in the world.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Construction Projects

Carefully read “The Panama Canal” and “The Mystery of the Moai.” They both describe very different construction projects. Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you compare and contrast the purpose behind each structure and the challenges the builders faced. Use details from both articles to support your answer.

Passage One: The Panama Canal

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**Passage Two:
The Mystery of the Moai**

Easter Island lies in the South Pacific Ocean, closest to the country of Chile in South America. The earliest people to settle Easter Island probably came from Polynesia, but no one knows when, how, or why they made the trip. These islanders called their island Rapa Nui, but the name Easter Island came from the fact that European explorers first arrived there on Easter in 1722. What amazed the explorers then still amazes visitors and anthropologists today: 877 giant statues called moai, carved from the hard ash of a volcano. These moai, which were created between 1400 A.D. and 1600 A.D., appear nowhere else in the world.

Moai range in height from about 3 1/2 feet to about 72 feet. They weigh up to 165 tons. Some of these statues are standing upright on rock platforms called ahu. On top of a completed moai sits a carved stone that looks like a knot. This topknot is called a pukao.

Some of the moai on Easter Island lie unfinished at the volcano where the hard ash rock comes from, and where all the moai were carved. Some lie on tracks used to move them, while others stand on their ahu. Those that are upright face the land, not the sea. How do you think people of long ago were able to carve, transport, and then raise the statues with no more than simple tools and materials?

One archaeologist, Joanne Van Tilburg, studied all 877 moai on Easter Island in 1989. She invited people to come up with ideas about how the moai were moved and raised. The theories were tried out on models of moai, made from the same volcano ash as the real moai. These tests using ropes, logs, and such became part of a television program about the moai in the science series called Nova.

Joanne Van Tilburg concluded that it took many kinds of materials and many people to carve, move, and raise a moai. It probably took a long time to move just one moai from the volcano area to its ahu. No one idea for moving the model moai and raising it seemed to be 100 percent correct.

If you ask a native person of Easter Island how the moai made it onto their ahu, they will tell you their belief. They believe the moai walked across the island and stepped onto their ahu when they were told to do so. The power to make them walk is called mana.

In 1919, a British archaeologist named Katherine Routledge lived on Easter Island for a year. In her journal she wrote about an old woman who lived by the mountain where moai were made. This woman cooked for the carvers of the moai. She was said to have mana. So, with her orders, the moai walked to their ahu and stood on them, wearing their pukao.

The model moai used by Joanne Van Tilburg's group now stands at an island school. It reminds the young students of their great history. Why were these great statues made? Why do they face the land and not the ocean? Do the moai protect the people of Rapa Nui and help them to live their lives? The moai may be a mystery to many. For the people of Easter Island, they are a source of great pride and history.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Crazy About Games"

Carefully read "Crazy About Games." Then write a multi-paragraph essay in which you summarize the article. Be sure to use specific details and examples from the article to support your response.

Crazy About Games

For most families, holidays mean family gatherings with lots of food. In my family, holidays mean family gatherings with lots of games! Most often we spend holidays at my grandparents' house, but it doesn't really matter where we gather. There's a table and a game cupboard, closet, or shelf in every house.

All our relatives have the standard games, such as Monopoly, Parcheesi, checkers, and chess. Everyone has some unique games, too. My uncle, a writer, has a collection of word games. These include crossword-puzzle type games, guess-the-password games, and even games that use proverbs and old sayings. My aunt, who travels a lot, has a game of Go that she brought back from Japan. (She also has a tiny deck of cards she has carried in her purse since she was a teenager. It has been all around the world by now. She whips it out in airports, restaurants, and hotels; she even plays on those little fold-down trays on airplanes.) My father collects antique games, which he buys at garage sales. Those old games are more interesting to look at than to play. They often have pieces carved out of wood or ivory, and the boards are beautifully painted.

My family likes variety, so we have a wide selection of games. If it's late and everyone is feeling sort of lazy, we relax with a game of chance. Otherwise, we favor games of skill or games that combine skill and a little luck. There's one game, a card game, that we always come back to, and we play it whenever we're together. I've taught it to a lot of friends, but I've never found anyone else who has ever played it before. It's based on the game of Solitaire, the one where you start by setting out seven piles of cards in front of you. The ultimate goal is to get all of your cards out, in order by number and suit. Solitaire is a game for one, but we play a variation we call "Double Solitaire" - although we should call it Six-, Eight-, or sometimes Twelve-handed Solitaire. We make it into a game for a group, you see. Each player has his or her own deck of cards (those game cupboards are well stocked!).

Here's the thing about Double Solitaire: everyone plays simultaneously, and you can play your cards on anyone else's cards. (You can put your 2 of hearts on my ace of hearts; I can put my 10 of diamonds on your 9.) It's a free-for-all, and everyone plays as fast as possible. Sometimes two or three people try to play on the same card, so speed counts! The game is over when no one has any moves left. Then we separate and count all the cards that were played. Whoever put the most cards out is the winner of that round. Of course, we play several rounds, and each seems to get wilder and noisier.

It's a crazy game that we've invented. As people reach across the table to put cards out, the table becomes a blur of arms. People groan and cheer. Grandma hums, which I think is her strategy to distract everyone else. We're pretty sure Auntie Jean cheats, though no one has ever caught her; and anyway, it's all part of the fun. Laughter reigns during and after every game. In our family, a holiday wouldn't be a holiday without Double Solitaire.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

"Egg-Laying Species"

Carefully read "Egg-Laying Species." Parents go to great lengths to protect their young. Write a multi-paragraph essay contrasting how the various species in the article protect their offspring. Describe why these animals behave in such a manner. Use details from the article to support your answer.

Egg-laying Species

Many kinds of creatures lay eggs, but there is great variation in how much care the parents provide for their eggs. Many species, such as codfish, lay their eggs and then abandon them. As a result, predators eat many of the eggs before they hatch. Some animals, such as turtles, go a bit farther and build a nest or dig a hole in which to lay their eggs. A small number of animals stay with their eggs and protect them until they hatch. Mainly, these animal parents scare away predators and keep the eggs clean.

Protective Behaviors

The earwig is an ugly little insect, but surprisingly maternal! The female lays her eggs in a hole and then scoops them into a neat pile. She remains constantly at their side, picking them up and licking them in order to remove bacteria. If a wasp or fly comes by and threatens to eat the eggs, the mother earwig scares it away.

An octopus also protects her eggs. She attaches them to rocks and then fights off any predators. She cleans the eggs with her many arms and even blows jets of water over them.

The wolf spider lays her eggs in a protective cocoon. Then she holds the cocoon close to her body as she moves around, chasing predators away. The cocoon keeps mold from growing on the eggs.

Helpful Dads

The protective parent is not always the female. Among the fish called blennies, for example, the father stays with the eggs, which are glued to shells or rocks in shallow pools at the edge of the sea. Male blennies have never been observed actively fighting off predators. Instead, they keep the eggs healthy by fanning them with their tails. This action keeps the water aerated, or full of oxygen.

Incubation

Among birds, parental care is not just helpful--it is essential. Bird eggs must continually be kept warm in order to survive. Most of the time, the female sits on the nest. The male brings food to the female, chases away predators, and occasionally sits on the eggs to give the female a break.

Birds are not the only creatures whose eggs must be incubated. Bees do not actually sit on their eggs, but their body temperature keeps the hive warm.

The degree to which an alligator incubates its eggs has a very significant outcome on the young. If the egg is incubated above 34 degrees centigrade, it will develop into a male. But if it is incubated at a lower temperature, it will turn into a female!

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Ellis Island

Carefully read “American Wings” and “Welcome to Ellis Island.” What challenges did immigrants face coming to America? Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining why you think people endured these challenges to become Americans. Use details from both texts to support your answer.

Passage One: Welcome to Ellis Island

Hi, my name is Eleanor, and I'll be your guide today through the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Let me tell you what we will be seeing on our tour. Then we can get started.

For those of you whose families came to the United States between 1892 and 1924, Ellis Island might have special meaning. It might very well be the port of entry your family members stepped through when they arrived by boat to the United States. Before their boat docked at Ellis Island, they probably looked up in awe to the Statue of Liberty, which is also here in New York Harbor.

The purpose of Ellis Island was to register and check immigrants who hoped to make new lives in America. On the ground floor, where we are now standing, people placed their baggage when they first entered the building. When we enter the Baggage Room, which is behind us, you will see displays of period baggage that might have belonged to immigrants. We will then go upstairs to view the most important room to arriving immigrants, the Registry Room.

From 1900 to 1924, thousands of people passed through the Registry Room every day. On one especially busy day, more than 10,000 people crossed this grand hall. It was here that individuals and families waited. They were examined, questioned, and then - with luck - registered as new Americans. The wait was long - maybe five hours or so if no problems occurred. Those who were deported might have had health problems officials could not cure or legal problems that made these newcomers unsuitable to American officials. Believe it or not, only two percent of those who came to Ellis Island were sent back to their original countries.

Now, before we go to the Baggage Room, we will enter one of the two theaters to see the film *Island of Hope, Island of Tears*. After you learn about the experiences of some immigrants, you will better appreciate the displays you'll see throughout this great building. Afterwards, we will enter the room where hearings took place to decide the fate of an immigrant with a legal or medical problem. You also will see the area where those people who had to stay overnight slept.

Near the end of our tour, we will visit an exhibit called "Treasures from Home." It contains over 1,000 objects and photographs brought here by immigrants who passed through Ellis Island.

Finally, we will visit the gift shop, which is terrific. Among other things, the gift shop has a computerized database of people who passed through Ellis Island. Each entry tells the history of a family of immigrants. Check it out on the shop's available computers. You might find your family name or the name of someone you know.

Enjoy your visit to the museum. The map I will hand out to you shows the rooms and displays I will take you to. You may then go with a partner to other exhibits for an hour before we all meet in the gift shop.

So, let's get started on our tour!

Passage Two: American Wings

A minute seemed like an hour, and each hour seemed to take forever.

The first hour was filled with confusion. Boris stepped down the plank and onto the dock, walking between his mother and father. Sea birds flew in circles above the boat as if they had no destination, which was just how Boris felt after two long weeks at sea. He and his family had traveled a long, long way from Minsk, Russia.

An officer called out instructions in English, but Boris could not understand the words. Instead, he followed the officer's hand as it waved him along with many others up a path to an impressive red brick building that stretched like a palace across the lawn.

The second hour took place in a great hall on the building's second floor. Boris, in his brown wool coat, stood beside his parents, who were clad in similar garments. Together, the family waited quietly in a vast herd of humans gathered from various parts of the globe in October of 1910.

By the third hour, Boris and his parents had moved to the front of the large crowd. Tables were lined up before a row of closed doors and dark hallways. On each table lay an open book in which an officer scribbled every time someone was allowed to pass.

"What is he writing in the book?" Boris whispered to his father in Russian.

"The names of the newly born," Mr. Segal answered.

"What do you mean?" Boris said. "I see a man with a beard, a woman with an infant in her arms, and two other children. Only the infant is newly born."

"Your father means that everyone whose name is written in the book is newly born this day in America," Ida Segal smiled.

As Boris was thinking about that, he heard the officer pronounce a strange but familiar sound in English.

"That's us," Mrs. Segal said as she ushered Boris forward. "This is our invitation!"

Mr. Segal answered many questions, some with the help of a translator who roamed from table to table. Finally, the officer scribbled three new names into the book. Boris glanced at the line he thought held his name, but he did not see the English spelling for his family name--Segal--that he had practiced so many times.

Four more hours passed in various rooms and hallways that branched off the great hall. Nurses and doctors listened to Boris's heart and looked into his eyes using strange medical instruments. At the last counter, Mr. Segal presented a letter from his cousin, Joshua, who lived with his family in Chicago. The letter stated that Boris and his parents were welcome in Chicago, where they would be provided assistance until they settled into their new life. The officer checked the letter against the new identity papers the family had been given. He shook his head and scratched his chin but let the family pass on toward the ferry.

Boris stood at the front of the ferry as Ellis Island faded away behind him, and the city of New York grew closer. For most of the half-hour journey, a single white bird flew alongside the boat. As the ferry pulled into its New York City slip, the bird flew inland.

As Boris and his parents left the ferry, he did not know that the letters the officer had written in the book on Ellis Island spelled out a word the officer understood in English. Boris Segal from Minsk was now Boris Seagull, soon to be living in the city of Chicago. Boris did not know yet that his name had changed, but he was ready to try his new American wings.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Jet Packs

After researching articles on jet packs, write a detailed essay that explains the process of how they work. In your essay, include the conclusion or implications you can draw from the development of this technology. Cite the sources used for your research, pointing out key elements from each source.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Learning from the Past

What can we learn from the past? How can the nation prevent future discrimination? After reading the articles "A Grave Wrong" and "Faces of Terror?," write an essay that explains what the United States can learn from the aftermath of Pearl Harbor and September 11, 2001. Support your discussion with evidence from each of the articles.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Persephone and the Four Seasons

Different cultures have different explanations for the four seasons, which are frequently included in their folklore and literature. For example, the play *Persephone* explains why we have the seasons of spring and winter.

After reading an article on the reason for seasons and the play *Persephone*, write a multi-paragraph informational essay discussing why we have our four seasons. Include information from both texts to support your discussion.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Rock Climbing

Pretend that you are a writer for your school newspaper. Write a feature story on the sport of rock climbing. Use information from the passage in your feature story.

ROCK CLIMBING

Rock climbing, a popular type of mountain climbing, refers to scaling cliffs with special equipment and techniques. For every climb, knowledge of proper clothing, equipment, techniques, and the nature of the cliffs themselves is necessary.

All clothing and equipment must suit the conditions. It is especially important that climbing shoes and harnesses fit correctly and be appropriate for the climb. Technical climbing, where it would be hazardous to climb without protection, used to require equipment such as pitons, special hammers, and ropes. Pitons, or metal pegs, were pounded into cracks in the rocks. A snap link was attached to each piton and rope was pulled through the link. Thus, climbers would "tie into" a mountainside. Now modern rock climbers almost always use artificial anchors, called chock stones instead of pitons. Chock stones are metal wedges strung with a loop of cable or rope through which a snap link can be attached. A rope threaded through the snap link helps protect climbers in case of a fall.

Rock climbers have their own vocabulary for climbing techniques and for the different-sized cracks in the rock. A finger crack is wide enough to allow fingers to enter and grasp the rock. Sometimes rock climbers use a lie back to climb a finger crack. A lie back is performed by pulling on the crack with the

fingers while pushing against the rock with the feet. A hand crack will allow a handhold or a foothold. A climber can use a fist jam by clenching his or her fist after inserting the hand into a hand crack. A chimney is an opening in the rock big enough for a climber to enter. A climber can bridge a chimney by using outward pressure from opposing parts of the body.

No one should climb without at least one experienced climber who knows the composition of the cliffs and who will not take unnecessary chances. Typical kinds of rock encountered in rock climbing are granite, limestone, and sandstone. Granite is tough but limestone and sandstone crumble easily. Climbers should thoroughly test the firmness of the rock formation before taking a handhold or placing an artificial anchor.

People climb rocks for the vigorous exercise, the pleasure of climbing with friends, and seeing a mountain's beauty close at hand. Indeed, standing atop a mountain to see the shadows and the scenery far below is often thought to be reason enough for a strenuous climb.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Spread of the Black Death

In Martha Deeringer's article "The Black Death," the spread and cause of the dread disease are described in detail. In a multi-paragraph essay, describe a problem that enabled the disease to be transmitted quickly to a widespread area and a possible solution to the spread of the disease. Support your discussion with evidence from the text.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights grants protection to Americans on a daily basis. What does the Bill of Rights mean to you as an American Citizen? Why do you think it is important? How might your life be different without the rights it grants?

Write an essay in which you specifically discuss the rights that we as Americans enjoy because of these amendments.

The Bill of Rights

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment II

A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

Amendment III

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment V

No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offence to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, not be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

Amendment VI

In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the Assistance of Counsel for his defence.

Amendment VII

In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

Amendment VIII

Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

Amendment IX

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Amendment X

The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

“The Clean Machine”

Read “Clean Driving: The Green Machine and the Power of Electricity.”

You are Henri Laurent. Write a speech to deliver at the International Auto Show to convince those visitors to buy your Green Machine. Use details from the passage to support your speech.

Clean Driving: The Green Machine and the Power of Electricity

With gas prices rising and the greenhouse effect worsening, French carmaker Henri Laurent is excited to unveil his newest creation. Known as "The Green Machine," Laurent's new car is causing a buzz among environmental groups. Why? In Laurent's own words, "The Green Machine is the first completely electric passenger vehicle that can drive as long and far as a traditional gas-powered car."

Laurent's company, EcoMobile, says that the car has other benefits. "The Green Machine will cost *less* - in the long run - than a standard family sedan," the company claims in a brochure. EcoMobile even claims that the electricity needed to power the car costs *half* as much as an equal amount of gasoline. Some consumer groups question these claims, but Laurent and EcoMobile are adamant. "The Green Machine is our future," Laurent says. "It may even be the car that saves the Earth."

The History of Electricity on Wheels

Electric cars are not a new creation. In fact, the first electric car was invented in 1899 by a Belgian named Camille Jenatzy. Jenatzy's car traveled sixty-six miles per hour. It soon spawned a host of followers. In time, the electric car became very popular. In 1900, for example, 800 of the 2,300 cars registered in the American Northeast were powered by electricity.

The electric car continued to be sold until the 1930s. But at that time consumers wanted to drive increasingly long distances. As a result, the electric engine was abandoned. Electric engines, unfortunately, can only go so far before they must stop and recharge. Therefore, the world became populated exclusively by gas-powered cars. These cars brought with them the planet-choking problem of car exhaust.

This exhaust continued to accumulate over the next fifty years. As a result, air quality worsened. State governments started to fight back. For example, in 1992 California forced carmakers to start making cars that do not pollute as much. To comply, carmakers once again began making electric-powered cars.

Electric Cars of Today

But like electric cars of the early twentieth century, modern electric cars have encountered a host of complaints. Consumers say these cars still cannot drive very far or fast, and that they cannot tow too much weight. To answer these complaints, carmakers such as General Motors have tried to produce hybrid vehicles. These cars have engines powered by electricity *and* gas. Yes, these cars produce pollution, but not as much as a standard car. But they will not go as far or as fast as a standard car, and this leaves many consumers uninterested.

The Green Machine: A New Idea

In comes Henri Laurent and The Green Machine. According to Laurent, who has a long history of designing and producing cars, The Green Machine came as a response to a very simple question. "I asked myself," Laurent says, "'why do people not like electric cars?' The answer was easy. They do not go far or fast enough."

Laurent claims that his electric car is like a gasser, but even better. Laurent quickly hit upon what he calls the car's "secret." "Usually," he explains, "an electric car has to stop every couple of hours to recharge. This recharging can take almost an hour, which is very inconvenient. What we have done is come up with a way for the car to charge itself *as it drives*." "Yes," says Laurent, "the car must still stop to fully charge up. But, on the go, the car will provide power for itself."

Debating the Secrets of The Green Machine

Laurent is keeping this technological breakthrough a secret. "I do not want the competition to catch on," he says. In simplest terms, Laurent will admit that the car recharges itself though friction. "Imagine a car full of people going downhill. The weight of the people pulls the car downhill. That is the power of The Green Machine."

Skeptics are less than enthusiastic about Laurent's "breakthrough." "I can't imagine that Laurent's idea can work," says Karen Jackson, a lead designer for Ford Motors. "Sure, the weight pulls the car down the hill, but something had to push it up. There would be no excess energy produced." Phil Michaels, a physics professor at Western University, agrees. "If this sort of system were possible, we would have bikes, roller skates, and big-wheel-type bicycles that power themselves." Michaels is ready to admit that a long-distance, high-speed electric car "would be possible. But that doesn't mean that The Green Machine is such a car."

The Car is Unveiled

Laurent is unconcerned by such criticisms. "The system works," he says assuredly. "I know because I've driven a Green Machine to work for the past six months." Others will soon find out for themselves, when The Green Machine is unveiled later this month at the International Auto Show in Detroit, Michigan. Two months later, The Green Machine will go on sale in Los Angeles and France.

"Critics should go buy a Green Machine and see for themselves," jokes Laurent. "I think they'll find the car as miraculous as I do."

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

The Power of Waves

Both ocean rogue waves and tsunamis are enormous, sometimes measuring over 100 feet tall. Additionally, their power and speed can cause massive amounts of destruction. After learning about rogue waves and tsunamis, write a multi-paragraph, informative essay comparing these two natural occurrences. Support your comparison with facts and details from the texts and videos you study.

Pilot Prompts

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 9 – Grades 6-8

At the South Pole (pilot)

In 1911, experienced explorers Robert Falcon Scott and Roald Amundsen led separate expedition teams to the South Pole. Although Scott and Amundsen's journeys were similarly treacherous, they each gave quite a different account of their South Pole adventures. How did each explorer emphasize and interpret different evidence and facts in his account? How did each explorer present key information in his account to create an effective message?

After reading and analyzing each explorer's expedition account, write a multi-paragraph essay that compares and contrasts how each explorer presented key information to create an effective message. Be sure to include and cite evidence from the text to support your ideas.

Source One:

Scott's Last Expedition Volume I

Author: Captain R. F. Scott

Robert Falcon Scott Journal Entry: Excerpt

Tuesday, February 6.

Lunch 7900; Supper 7210. Temp. -15 F.... this evening, though we are not as far advanced as I expected, the outlook is much more promising. Evans is the chief anxiety now; his cuts and wounds suppurate, his nose looks very bad.... I am indeed glad to think we shall so soon have done with plateau conditions. It took us twenty-seven days to reach the Pole and twenty-one days back—in all forty-eight days—nearly seven weeks in low temperature with almost incessant wind....

Tuesday, February 28.

Lunch. Thermometer went below -40 F last night; it was desperately cold for us, but we had a fair night.... Only twenty-four miles from the depot. The Sun shines brightly, but there is little warmth in it. There is no doubt the middle of the Barrier is a pretty awful locality.

Sunday, March 4.

Lunch. Things looking very black indeed.... All the morning we had to pull with all our strength, and in four hours we covered three miles.... We are about forty-two miles from the next depot and have a week's food, but only about three to four days' fuel—we are as economical of the latter as one can possibly be, and we cannot afford to save food and pull as we are pulling.... I don't know what I should do if Wilson and Bowers weren't so determinedly cheerful over things.

Thursday, March 8.

Lunch. Worse and worse in morning; poor Oates' left foot can never last out, and time over footgear something awful. Have to wait in night footgear for nearly an hour before I start changing, and then am generally first to be ready. Wilson's feet giving trouble now, but this mainly because he gives so much help to others. We did four miles this morning and are now eight miles from the depot—a ridiculously small distance to feel in difficulties, yet on this surface we know we cannot equal half our old marches, and that for that effort we expend nearly double the energy.

Friday, March 16 or Saturday 17.

At night Oates was worse and we knew the end had come.... He slept through the night before last, hoping not to wake; but he woke in the morning—yesterday. It was blowing a blizzard. He said, "I am just going outside and may be some time." He went out into the blizzard and we have not seen him since.... We knew that poor Oates was walking to his death, but though we tried to dissuade him, we knew it was the act of a brave man and an English gentleman. We all hope to meet the end with a similar spirit, and assuredly the end is not far.... We are cold on the march now, and at all times except meals.... We are at No. 14 pony camp, only two pony marches from One Ton Depot. We leave here our theodolite, a camera, and Oates' sleeping bags. Diaries, etc., and geological specimens carried at Wilson's special request, will be found with us or on our sledge.

Sunday, March 18.

Today, lunch, we are twenty-one miles from the depot. Ill fortune presses, but better may come.... My right foot has gone, nearly all the toes—two days ago I was proud possessor of best feet.... Bowers takes first place in condition, but there is not much to choose after all. The others are still confident of getting through—or pretend to be—I don't know!.... The mileage would have seemed ridiculously small on our outward journey.

Thursday, March 22 and 23.

Blizzard bad as ever—Wilson and Bowers unable to start.... Have decided it shall be natural—we shall march for the depot with or without our effects and die in our tracks.

Thursday, March 29. . . .

Every day we have been ready to start for our depot eleven miles away, but outside the door of the tent it remains a scene of whirling drift. We shall stick it out to the end, but we are getting weaker, of course, and the end cannot be far.

It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more. R. SCOTT.

Last entry. For God's sake look after our People.

Source Two:
An Account of the Norwegian Antarctic Expedition in the "Fram,"
1910 – 1912
by Roald Amundsen

Roald Amundsen Journal Entry: Excerpt

The 14th was cool -- the temperature remained at -68.8 F. Fortunately it was clear, so that we could see where we were going. We had not gone far before a bright projection appeared on the level surface. Out with the glasses -- the depot! There it lay, right in our course. Hanssen, who had driven first the whole way, without a forerunner, and for the most part without a compass, had no need to be ashamed of his performance. We agreed that it was well done, and that, no doubt, was all the thanks he got. We reached it at 10.15 a.m., and unloaded our sledges at once. Wisting undertook the far from pleasant task of getting us a cup of warm milk at -68.8 F. He put the Primus behind one of the cases of provisions, and set it going; strangely enough, the paraffin was still liquid in the vessel, but this was no doubt because it had been well protected in the case. A cup of Horlick's Malted Milk tasted better that day than the last time I had tried it -- in a restaurant in Chicago.

Having enjoyed that, we threw ourselves on the almost empty sledges, and set our course for home. The going was difficult, but, with the light weight they now had to pull, the dogs went along well. I sat with Wisting, as I considered his team the strongest. The cold held on unchanged, and I was often surprised that it was possible to sit still on the sledges, as we did, without freezing; but we got on quite well. One or two I saw off their sledges all day, and most of us jumped off from time to time and ran by the side to get warm. I myself took to my ski and let myself be pulled along. This so-called sport has never appealed to me, but under the circumstances it was permissible; it warmed my feet, and that was the object of it. I again had recourse to this "sport" of ski-driving later on, but that was for another reason.

On September 24 we had the first tidings of spring, when Bjaaland came back from the ice and told us he had shot a seal. So the seals had begun to come up on to the ice; this was a good sign. The next day we went out to bring it in, and we got another at the same time. There was excitement among the dogs when they got fresh meat, to say nothing of fresh blubber. Nor were we men inclined to say no to a fresh steak.

On September 27 we removed the roof that had covered over the window of our room. We had to carry the light down through a long wooden channel, so that it was considerably reduced by the time it came in; but it was light -- genuine daylight -- and it was much appreciated.

On the 26th Camilla came back, after an absence of ten days. She had been let loose sixty-eight miles from Framheim on the last trip. When she came in, she was as fat as ever; probably she had been feasting in her solitude on one of her comrades. She was received with great ovations by her many admirers.

On September 29 a still more certain sign of spring appeared -- a flight of Antarctic petrels. They came flying up to us to bring the news that now spring had come -- this time in earnest. We were delighted to see these fine, swift birds again. They flew round the house several times to see whether we were all

there still; and we were not long in going out to receive them. It was amusing to watch the dogs: at first the birds flew pretty near the ground; when the dogs caught sight of them, they rushed out -- the whole lot of them -- to catch them. They tore along, scouring the ground, and, of course, all wanted to be first. Then the birds suddenly rose into the air, and presently the dogs lost sight of them. They stood still for a moment, glaring at each other, evidently uncertain of what was the best thing to do. Such uncertainty does not, as a rule, last long. They made up their minds with all desirable promptitude and flew at each other's throats.

So now spring had really arrived; we had only to cure the frost-bitten heels and then away.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 2 – Grades 6-8

Central Idea in “Matthew Henson at the Top of the World” (pilot)

Read the text “Matthew Henson at the Top of the World.” What is a central idea expressed in this text? How is the central idea conveyed through specific details in the text?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the development of one central idea in the text “Matthew Henson at the Top of the World.” Use relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples from the text to develop your ideas.

“Matthew Henson at the Top of the World”

“It was in June, 1891, that I started on my first trip to the Arctic regions, as a member of what was known as the ‘North Greenland Expedition,’” Matthew Henson later wrote. So began the first of five expeditions on which Henson would accompany Peary.

During this first trip to Greenland, on a ship named Kite, Peary discovered how valuable Henson was to any expedition. He reported that Henson was able to establish “a friendly relationship with the Eskimos, who believed him to be somehow related to them because of his brown skin....” Peary’s expedition was also greatly aided by Henson’s expert handling of the Eskimos, dogs, and equipment. Henson also hunted with the Eskimos for meat for the expedition and cooked under the supervision of Josephine Peary, Robert’s wife. On the expedition’s return to New York, September 24, 1892, Peary wrote, “Henson, my faithful colored boy, a hard worker and apt at anything,...showed himself...the equal of others in the party.”

This first expedition to the Arctic led to several others, but it was with the 1905 expedition that Peary first tried to find that mystical point, the North Pole, the sole goal of the 1908 expedition.

On July 6, 1908, the Roosevelt sailed from New York City. Aboard it were the supplies and men for an expedition to reach the North Pole. Accompanying Peary were Captain Robert Bartlett and Ross Marvin, who had been with Peary on earlier expeditions; George Borup, a young graduate from Yale and the youngest member of the group; Donald MacMillan, a teacher; and a doctor, J. W. Goodsell. And, of course, Matthew Henson. In Greenland the group was joined by forty-one Eskimos and 246 dogs, plus the supplies. “The ship,” Henson wrote, “is now in a most perfect state of dirtiness.” On

September 5, the Roosevelt arrived at Caped Sheridan, and the group began preparing for their journey, moving supplies north to Cape Columbia by dog sled to establish a base camp. Peary named the camp Crane City in honor of Zenas Crane, who had contributed \$10,000 to the expedition.

The plan was to have two men, Bartlett and Borup, go ahead of the rest of the group to cut a trail stretching from the base camp to the North Pole. On February 28, the two men set out, and on March 1, the remainder of the expedition started north, following the trail Bartlett and Borup had cut the day before. At first, trouble seemed to plague them. On the first day, three of the sledges broke, Henson's among them, despite the fact that it was nearly 50 degrees below zero.

As the days passed, further trouble came the way of the expedition. Several times they encountered leads – open channels of water – and were forced to wait until the ice closed over before proceeding. On March 14, Peary decided to send Donald MacMillan and Dr. Goodsell back to the base camp. MacMillan could hardly walk, because he had frozen a heel when his foot had slipped into one of the leads. Dr. Goodsell was exhausted. As the expedition went on, more men were sent back due to exhaustion and frostbite. George Borup was sent back on March 20, and, on the 26th, so was Ross Marvin.

Although the expedition had encountered problems with subzero temperatures, with open water, and in handling the dogs, they had no real injuries. On Ross Marvin's return trip to the base camp, however, he met with tragedy.

On his journey, Marvin was accompanied by two Eskimos. He told them that he would go ahead to scout the trail. About an hour later, the Eskimos came upon a hole in the ice; floating in it was Marvin's coat. Marvin had gone through thin ice and, unable to save himself, had drowned or frozen. The Peary expedition had suffered its first – and fortunately its last – fatality.

By April 1, Peary had sent back all of the original expedition except for four Eskimos and Matthew Henson. When Bartlett, the last man to be sent back, asked Peary why he didn't also send Henson back, Peary replied, "I can't get along without him." The remnant of the original group pushed on.

We had been travelling eighteen to twenty hours out of every twenty-four. Man, that was killing work! Forced marches all the time. From our other expeditions we had found out that we couldn't carry food for more than fifty day, fifty-five at a pinch....

We used to travel by night and sleep in the warmest part of the day. I was ahead most of the time with two of the Eskimos.

So Matthew Henson described the grueling journey. Finally, on the morning of April 6, Peary called a halt. Henson wrote: "I was driving ahead and was swinging around to the right.... The Commander, who was about 50 feet behind me, called to me and said we would go into camp...." In fact, both Henson and Peary felt that they might have reached the Pole already. That day, Peary took readings with a sextant and determined that they were within three miles of the Pole. Later he sledged ten miles north and found he was traveling south; to return to camp, Peary would have to return north and then head south in another direction – something that could only happen at the North

Pole. To be absolutely sure, the next day Peary again took readings from solar observations. It was the North Pole, he was sure.

On that day Robert Peary had Matthew Henson plant the American flag at the North Pole. Peary then cut a piece from the flag and placed it and two letters in a glass jar that he left at the Pole. The letters read:

90 N. Lat., North Pole April 6, 1909

Arrived here today, 27 marches from C. Columbia.

I have with me 5 men, Matthew Henson, colored, Ootah, Egingwah, Seegloo, and Ooqueah, Eskimos; 5 sledges and 38 dogs. My ship, the S.S. Roosevelt, is in winter quarters at Cape Sheridan, 90 miles east of Columbia.

The expedition under my command which has succeeded in reaching the Pole is under the auspices of the Peary Arctic Club of New York City, and has been fitted out and sent north by members and friends of the Club for the purpose of securing this geographical prize, if possible, for the honor and prestige of the United States of America.

The officers of the Club are Thomas H. Hubbard of New York, President; Zenas Crane, of Mass., Vice-president; Herbert L. Bridgman, of New York, Secretary and Treasurer.

I start back for Cape Columbia tomorrow.

*Robert E. Peary
United States Navy*

90 N. Lat., North Pole April 6, 1909

I have today hoisted the national ensign of the United States of America at this place, which my observations indicate to be the North Polar axis of the earth, and have formally taken possession of the entire region and adjacent, for and in the name of the President of the United States of America.

I leave this record and United States flag in possession.

*Robert E. Peary
United States Navy*

Having accomplished their goal, the small group set out on the return journey. It was, Matthew Henson wrote, "17 days of haste, toil, and misery..... We crossed lead after lead, sometimes like a bareback rider in the circus, balancing on cake after cake of ice." Finally they reached the Roosevelt, where they could rest and eat well at last. The Pole had been conquered!

During the return trip to New York City, Henson became increasingly puzzled by Peary's behavior. "Not once in [three weeks]," Henson wrote, "did he speak a word to me. Then he...ordered me to get to work. Not a word about the North Pole or anything connected with it." Even when the Roosevelt docked in New York in September of 1909, Peary remained withdrawn and silent, saying little to the press and quickly withdrawing to his home in Maine.

The ostensible reason for his silence was that when the group returned to New York, they learned that Dr. Fredrick A. Cook was claiming that he had gone to the North Pole – and done so before Peary reached it. Peary told his friends that he wished to wait for his own proofs to be validated by the scientific societies before he spoke. He felt sure that Cook would not be able to present the kinds of evidence that he could present, and so it proved.

On December 15, Peary was declared the first to reach the North Pole; Cook could not present adequate evidence that he had made the discovery. Peary and Bartlett were awarded gold medals by the National Geographic Society; Henson was not. Because Henson was black, his contributions to the expedition were not recognized for many years.

After 1909, Henson worked in a variety of jobs. For a while, he was a parking-garage attendant in Brooklyn, and at the age of forty-six, he became a clerk in the U. S. customhouse in Lower Manhattan. In the meantime, friends tried again and again to have his contributions to the expedition recognized. At last, in 1937, nearly thirty years after the expedition, he was invited to join the Explorers Club in New York, and in 1944, Congress authorized a medal for all of the men on the expedition, including Matthew Henson.

After his death in New York City on March 9, 1955, another lasting tribute was made to Henson's endeavors. In 1961, his home state of Maryland placed a bronze tablet in memory of him in the state house. It reads in part:

MATTHEW ALEXANDER HENSON
Co-discoverer of the North Pole with Admiral Robert Edwin Peary
April 6, 1909

Son of Maryland, exemplification of courage, fortitude, and patriotism, whose valiant deeds of noble devotion under the command of Admiral Robert Edwin Peary, in pioneer Arctic exploration and discovery, established everlasting prestige and glory for his state and country.

Source: Haskins, Jim. "Matthew Henson at the Top of the World." *Against All Opposition: Black Explorers in America*. New York: Bloomsbury, 1992. Print.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Effects of Climate Change on National Parks" (pilot)

From the Badlands to the Everglades and from the Rocky Mountains to Assateague Island, there are so many sights to see and explore in the fifty-nine national parks located in the United States. Visitors come from all over the world to experience these protected areas. However, many people are finding

that climate change is threatening the beauty of these scenic preserves. How is climate change affecting national parks? What can scientists do to protect these natural landmarks?

After reading the sources, write a multi-paragraph essay discussing how climate change is affecting national parks and include what scientists are doing to protect these natural landmarks. Be sure to include specific details, facts, and examples from the sources to support your ideas.

Source 1

<http://www.nps.gov/articles/climatechangeandparks.htm>

Source 2

<http://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/effectsinparks.htm>

Source 3

<http://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/photogallery.htm>

Source 4

(National Park Service's response to Climate Change in Parks):

<http://www.nps.gov/subjects/climatechange/response.htm>

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 8– Grades 6-8

Hydrogen as an Alternative Fuel (pilot)

In recent years, concerns about climate change, carbon footprints, and energy independence have received increased media attention. To address these issues, scientists have been seeking alternatives to fossil fuels. Hydrogen offers pollution-free energy, and many believe it will be a practical contender in the alternative energy field.

After reading the article “Rocks in Your Gas Tank?,” write an essay that discusses the practicality of using hydrogen gas as a fuel source and evaluates the claim that zeolite rocks can provide efficient storage. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the text.

Rocks in Your Gas Tank?

Article provided by the NASA Explorers Education Program

Edited by Vantage Learning

April 17, 2003: Imagine pulling up to a filling station, inserting the nozzle into the tank, and finding out that the gas flowing into your tank is . . . hydrogen. It's colorless, odorless, and the byproduct of burning hydrogen is water vapor, which is quickly and safely absorbed by the environment. One pound of hydrogen supplies three times as much energy as a pound of gasoline. And it is the most plentiful element in the universe! No wonder scientists are trying to figure out how to make hydrogen work as a practical fuel.

The New with the Old

"Dozens of companies, including all the major automobile manufacturers, have designed engines that burn hydrogen - they're a lot like the internal combustion engines we have in cars today," says Al Sacco, director of the NASA-supported Center for Advanced Microgravity Materials Processing (CAMMP) at Northeastern University in Boston. "Fuel cells - another possible source of power for cars - use hydrogen, too. To make these technologies work in the real world, scientists must find a way to store and transport hydrogen safely at a cost comparable to that of gasoline."

It's not easy; hydrogen gas is light and elusive. Tiny H₂ molecules like to sneak through cracks and seals - and once free they quickly disperse. Hydrogen diffuses four times faster than methane and ten times faster than gasoline vapors. This is great for safety because a leak is quickly diluted and rendered harmless. It's a headache for anyone who wants to store the gas.

Liquid hydrogen is more compact and easier to contain, but it can be troublesome, too. Hydrogen liquefies only at very cold temperatures. Maintaining a tank full of liquefied hydrogen requires a heavy special storage system called a *cryogenic tank* that may not be practical for passenger cars. Liquid hydrogen is actually cold enough to freeze air. This could cause plugged valves and unwanted pressure build-ups. Insulation to prevent such problems adds to the weight of the storage system.

A Practical Alternative

How can we overcome these obstacles? Simple: put rocks in your gas tank. Not ordinary rocks. Zeolites. Zeolites are porous, rocky substances that act like molecular sponges. In their crystalline form, zeolites are threaded by a network of interconnected tunnels and cages, much like a honeycomb. A fuel tank lined with such crystals might be able to trap and store hydrogen gas in a liquid-like state - without heavy cryogenics.

The name zeolite comes from the Greek words "zeo" (to boil) and "lithos" (stone), literally meaning "the rock that boils." This is because zeolites give up their contents when heated. Nearly 50 kinds of zeolites with different chemical compositions and crystal-structures are found in nature, and chemists have figured out how to synthesize many more. Anyone with a cat has seen some: they act as odor-absorbers in kitty litter. "The zeolites we have now can store quite a bit of hydrogen," notes Sacco. "But not enough."

Fill 'er Up!

How much is enough? Picture this: Your car's fuel tank is lined with crystallized, porous rock, and that "rock" weighs 93 pounds. You pull into a hydrogen fueling station and the attendant forces 7 pounds of hydrogen into the zeolite-lined walls of the tank. This, theoretically, would be the hydrogen equivalent to a full tank of gasoline - in both total weight and energy content.

"If we can grow zeolite crystals that hold 6% to 7% of their own weight in hydrogen," says Sacco, "then a zeolite tankful of hydrogen would be competitive with an ordinary tankful of gasoline." The best existing zeolites can hold only 2% to 3%, however.

Bigger is Better

In 1995, Sacco traveled to space as a mission specialist onboard the space shuttle Columbia. His purpose: to grow bigger and better zeolite crystals. "In low gravity, materials come together more

slowly, allowing zeolite crystals to form that are both larger and more orderly." Zeolite crystals produced on Earth are small, roughly 2 to 8 microns across. "That's about one-tenth the thickness of a human hair." The ones he grew on the space shuttle were not only 10 times bigger, but they were also better organized internally - a promising start.

"The next step is the International Space Station (ISS)," says Sacco. He and others at CAMMP have built a Zeolite Crystal Growth Furnace, which was installed on the ISS in early 2002. The furnace has already been used to grow some crystals.

A Dream Come True?

"Now we need to get those crystals back to Earth where we can examine them," says Sacco. The goal, he says, is not to mass produce zeolite crystals in space. That's not economical - at least not yet. "We simply want to find out if it's possible to grow zeolite crystals that can reach the 7% threshold. If we can do that in space, we'll figure out how to reproduce the process on the ground." The goal, of course, is to produce alternative fuels for pennies on the pound.

Throughout his career, Sacco has envisioned a worldwide transition from fossil to hydrogen fuels. It's a big dream, but it could happen. "Zeolites may be the key to hydrogen fuel as a leapfrog technology."

Coming soon: A hydrogen fueling station near you?

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 7– Grades 6-7

Impact of U.S. Government Policies on Native American Populations (pilot)

U.S. government policies in the 1800s caused major changes in the migration patterns and cultural practices of Native Americans. Congress signed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which forced tribes to resettle on reservations west of the Mississippi River. In 1887, the Dawes Act further threatened their way of life. This policy forced the idea of private ownership on the tribes. The government divided communal reservation land into pieces and encouraged tribe members to farm and ranch on the land like their white neighbors. Popular belief was that if Native Americans adopted white ways, they would let go of their own cultural traditions and become a part of the larger society.

Read information about the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Dawes Act of 1887. In a multi-paragraph essay, analyze the impact of U.S. government policies in the 1800s on Native American migration patterns and cultural practices. Cite the text to support your analysis.

Source 1:
by Kerry C. Kelly

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/fed-indian-policy/>

Dawes Act (1887)

Federal Indian policy during the period from 1870 to 1900 marked a departure from earlier policies that were dominated by removal, treaties, reservations, and even war. The new policy focused

specifically on breaking up reservations by granting land allotments to individual Native Americans. Very sincere individuals reasoned that if a person adopted white clothing and ways, and was responsible for his own farm, he would gradually drop his Indian-ness and be assimilated into the population. It would then no longer be necessary for the government to oversee Indian welfare in the paternalistic way it had been obligated to do, or provide meager annuities that seemed to keep the Indian in a subservient and poverty-stricken position.

On February 8, 1887, Congress passed the Dawes Act, named for its author, Senator Henry Dawes of Massachusetts. Also known as the General Allotment Act, the law allowed for the President to break up reservation land, which was held in common by the members of a tribe, into small allotments to be parceled out to individuals. Thus, Native Americans registering on a tribal "roll" were granted allotments of reservation land. "To each head of a family, one-quarter of a section; To each single person over eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section ; To each orphan child under eighteen years of age, one-eighth of a section; and To each other single person under eighteen years now living, or who may be born prior to the date of the order of the President directing an allotment of the lands embraced in any reservation, one-sixteenth of a section. . . "

Section 8 of the act specified groups that were to be exempt from the law. It stated that "the provisions of this act shall not extend to the territory occupied by the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Seminoles, and Osage, Miamies and Peorias, and Sacs and Foxes, in the Indian Territory, nor to any of the reservations of the Seneca Nation of New York Indians in the State of New York, nor to that strip of territory in the State of Nebraska adjoining the Sioux Nation on the south."

Subsequent events, however, extended the act's provisions to these groups as well. In 1893 President Grover Cleveland appointed the Dawes Commission to negotiate with the Cherokees, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, who were known as the Five Civilized Tribes. As a result of these negotiations, several acts were passed that allotted a share of common property to members of the Five Civilized Tribes in exchange for abolishing their tribal governments and recognizing state and Federal laws. In order to receive the allotted land, members were to enroll with the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Once enrolled, the individual's name went on the "Dawes rolls." This process assisted the BIA and the Secretary of the Interior in determining the eligibility of individual members for land distribution.

The purpose of the Dawes Act and the subsequent acts that extended its initial provisions was purportedly to protect Indian property rights, particularly during the land rushes of the 1890s, but in many instances the results were vastly different. The land allotted to the Indians included desert or near-desert lands unsuitable for farming. In addition, the techniques of self-sufficient farming were much different from their tribal way of life. Many Indians did not want to take up agriculture, and those who did want to farm could not afford the tools, animals, seed, and other supplies necessary to get started. There were also problems with inheritance. Often young children inherited allotments that they could not farm because they had been sent away to boarding schools. Multiple heirs also caused a problem; when several people inherited an allotment, the size of the holdings became too small for efficient farming.

Note 1: For more information, visit the National Archives' Digital Classroom, Teaching With Documents Lesson Plan: Maps of Indian Territory, the Dawes Act, and Will Rogers' Enrollment Case File.

Note 2: This article was written by Kerry C. Kelly, a teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, in Flemington, NJ.

To view
Source 2:
Maps of Indian Territory (Oklahoma) 1885 and 1891
[click here.](#)

Source 3:
The Legacy of Indian Removal (1830-1840)
By Donna Sharer

http://www.ourdocuments.gov/document_data/pdf/Our_Documents_Sourcebook_v3_3of4.pdf

The Legacy of Indian Removal (1830-1840)
 Winning Entry by Donna Sharer, High School Social Studies Teacher,
 Northeast High School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

In 1838-1839, between 15,000 and 17,000 Cherokee people were forcibly removed from their ancestral homes in the Southeastern United States. Nearly 7,000 U.S. soldiers rounded up the Cherokee and held them in military forts, and then marched them westward to "Indian Territory." More than 4,000 Cherokee died on the march. Today, this episode is often called the "Trail of Tears;" the Cherokee call it "Nuna-da-ut-sun'y".

Though many people in the U.S. have heard of the "Trail of Tears," they may not know about the events that led to this forced removal of all the Eastern Native American Nations to lands west of the Mississippi River. In today's vernacular, the Trail of Tears might be considered an example of "ethnic cleansing." Though the U.S. government pledged that this would be a "voluntary removal," nearly all the Cherokee were forced by military escort to move. Many left their homes only after they experienced broken treaties, were cheated in fraudulent land deals, and forced to fight wars to preserve their right to remain in the East.

In the very early 1800s, President Thomas Jefferson was the first United States president to suggest a policy of "Indian removal." The U.S. government's position during Jefferson's time was that removal would enable Native American cultures to survive. In spite of the fact that the Cherokee had already adopted many European-American ways, the accepted view was that the Cherokee, like other Native American Nations, were "aliens" unable to adapt to U.S. customs. The Cherokee had a constitution modeled after the U.S. Constitution. They lived as farmers and ranchers. A few owned African-American slaves. The Cherokee had a written alphabet, and most were literate; parts of the Bible had been translated into Cherokee. The Cherokee had their own newspaper, The Phoenix. They were called one of the "Five Civilized Tribes."

In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act. The Milestone Document at the heart of this lesson is President Andrew Jackson's "Message to Congress on 'Indian Removal'" (1830), delivered shortly after the 1830 Act was passed. The preamble of the Act states that this was: "An Act to provide for the exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the states or territories, and for their removal west of the river Mississippi." Jackson and his presidency are often remembered for democratizing the White House, but his record as president should also reflect his influence on and involvement in the removal of Native Americans from the Eastern United States.

There was opposition against "Indian Removal" at the time. Missionaries who worked with the Cherokee were imprisoned. Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett supported the Cherokee, at the expense of his political career. Henry Clay and Daniel Webster spoke out against the treaty to remove the Cherokee. When ordered to begin the removal process, General John Wool resigned his command in protest.

Two Supreme Court decisions in the 1830s sided with the Cherokee. Ultimately, however, with strong support by most U.S. Senators and Congressman, and by President Jackson, the policy was carried out.

To view a timeline of key dates and events provided with the Source 3 article [click here](#).

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 6– Grades 6-8

Slavery Prior to the Civil War (pilot)

Time is preparing to print a special edition of their magazine to celebrate the anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation (the executive order issued in 1863 by President Lincoln that freed the slaves in the South). An editor from the magazine has contacted you to write an article explaining the origin of slavery and its role in the agrarian South, prior to the Civil War.

Using the teacher-provided sources, write a multi-paragraph essay explaining the perspectives of slave owners and slaves on the institution of slavery in the United States prior to the Civil War.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 9 – Grades 6, 7

The Effects of Social Media on Teens (pilot)

Social media play a significant role in young adults' daily lives. Teens often tweet about what they had for breakfast, post updates to Facebook in between classes, or share their favorite photos with friends on Instagram. But what kind of impact do social media really have on teens today?

Experts in a wide range of fields have speculated on the effects of social media on teens. After reading expert opinions on the effects of social media on teens, write a multi-paragraph explanatory essay that compares and contrasts the authors' different viewpoints about the effects of social media on teens. Be sure to include key facts and details from your readings.

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 7 – Grades 6-8

The Legacy of Lincoln (pilot)

The assassination of President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, plunged a nation into a state of shock. The Civil War and issues of slavery were still fresh in the minds of Americans, and the murder of the president seemed to be a senseless act against a man who many viewed as a brilliant military leader, a protector of freedom, and a father of a nation. As a result, poems, speeches, and lithographs were created to mourn the country's loss of a national hero.

In a multi-paragraph essay, analyze Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!," Frederick Douglass's eulogy, and Charles Shober's lithograph and explain how each emphasized particular details about Lincoln's life following his death. Be sure to include specific details from each source to support your ideas and cite the text.

Source One:
"O Captain! My Captain!"
by Walt Whitman

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
 Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
 For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
 From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

**Source Two:
Excerpt from "Eulogy of Abraham Lincoln"
by Frederick Douglass**

...Abraham Lincoln was not, in the fullest sense of the word, either our man or our model. In his interests, in his associations, in his habits of thought, and in his prejudices, he was a white man. He was preeminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men. He was ready and willing at any time during the first years of his administration to deny, postpone, and sacrifice the rights of humanity in the colored people to promote the welfare of the white people of this country. In all his education and feeling he was an American of the Americans....The race to which we belong were not the special objects of his consideration....You are the children of Abraham Lincoln. We are at best only his step-children; children by adoption, children by forces of circumstances and necessity...

...The name of Abraham Lincoln was near and dear to our hearts in the darkest and most perilous hours of the Republic... it was enough for us that Abraham Lincoln was at the head of a great movement, and was in living and earnest sympathy with that movement, which, in the nature of things, must go on until slavery should be utterly and forever abolished in the United States.

...though the Union was more to him than our freedom or our future, under his wise and beneficent rule we saw ourselves gradually lifted from the depths of slavery to the heights of liberty and manhood...we saw Abraham Lincoln, after giving the slave-holders three months' grace in which to save their hateful slave system, penning the immortal paper, which, though special in its language, was general in its principles and effect, making slavery forever impossible in the United States. Though we waited long, we saw all this and more.

...I have said that President Lincoln was a white man, and shared the prejudices common to his countrymen towards the colored race.... His great mission was to accomplish two things: first, to save his country from dismemberment and ruin; and, second, to free his country from the great crime of slavery. To do one or the other, or both, he must have the earnest sympathy and the powerful cooperation of his loyal fellow-countrymen. Without this primary and essential condition to success his efforts must have been vain and utterly fruitless. Had he put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union, he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined. Though Mr. Lincoln shared the prejudices of his white fellow-countrymen against the Negro, it is hardly necessary to say that in his heart of hearts he loathed and hated slavery.

**Source Three:
BEHOLD OH! AMERICA,
YOUR SONS THE GREATEST AMONG MEN.
by Charles Shober**

https://www.myaccess.com/myaccess/itemImages/promptImages/Legacy_of_Lincoln_source_3.pdf

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 3 – Grades 6-8

The Legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers (pilot)

After the Civil War, many African Americans had difficulty finding jobs, so they joined the United States Army. These black cavalry regiments, called "Buffalo Soldiers," were sent to the Western Frontier to fight the Native Americans. Through the years, the Buffalo Soldiers left a lasting legacy due to their tireless service. Yet, what did it mean to be a Buffalo Soldier? What kind of challenges did the Buffalo Soldiers encounter?

Read the resources about the Buffalo Soldiers. In a multi-paragraph essay, analyze the Buffalo Soldiers' achievements and difficulties to explain their legacy. Be sure to include specific details from your research to support your ideas.

Source One:
"A Brief History of the Buffalo Soldiers"
by Vantage Learning

African American slaves had their freedom at the end of the Civil War. Yet, they still had to fight to gain the same rights as other Americans. As a result, African Americans were given the right to join the army. According to the African American Registry, there were six groups of African American soldiers created in the US Army.

These soldiers fought the Native Americans in the West. In fact, it was the Native Americans that gave them their name. Many people disagree about the origin of the name. According to the organization "Buffalo Soldiers of the American West," the name was given to them because the men's hair reminded the Native Americans of a buffalo's coat. Others say that the name referred to buffaloes because the animal was respected for its toughness (Hill). However, most people agree that the name was used out of respect to the soldiers (Hill).

Sadly, the Buffalo Soldiers' presence in the army was not welcomed. Many other soldiers thought that they should not be in the army because of their race. Some commanders would not even lead them (The African American Registry). The Buffalo Soldiers were given some of the worst jobs and fought under terrible conditions. This all happened while many other African Americans were experiencing other types of inequality throughout America.

Despite these poor conditions, the Buffalo Soldiers served their nation proudly. The African American Registry reports that fourteen Buffalo Soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor over a span of twenty years. They even gave their time and effort to many projects when they were not fighting. The African American Registry also points out that the Buffalo Soldiers had the lowest rate of desertion, or the leaving of a military post without permission, compared to many other groups at the time. This further proved their dedication to the US Army. Even though they faced many hardships, the Buffalo Soldiers were able to overcome them to leave a lasting legacy.

Works Consulted

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<<http://www.archives.gov/publications/record/1998/03/buffalo-soldiers.html>>.

Source Two:

"Cathay Williams: Female Buffalo Soldier" by Vantage Learning

The Buffalo Soldiers were making history during the Civil War because this was the first time that African Americans were able to join the army and fight in American wars. Yet, it would be many years before women of any race were allowed to join the army. This, however, did not stop an African American woman named Cathay Williams. Williams served her country for two years.

Cathay Williams began her life as a slave. According to Kathy Weiser, a writer for the organization Legends of America, Williams was later forced into military service as a cook for the soldiers that settled in her hometown of Jefferson City, Missouri.

It was not until much later that Cathay Williams would join the army willingly. After a brief medical assessment determined her fit for duty in 1866, she joined the 38th infantry and traveled into the West (United States Army). She passed as a man by changing her name to William Cathay and relied on her height of 5 feet and 9 inches (Weiser). Even though Williams got sick a handful of times during her service, her true gender was not discovered until 1868 when a surgeon found out her secret (United States Army). According to the United States Army, the surgeon made Cathay Williams leave as a result of an undocumented "disability." After she left the army, Cathay worked as a cook and a seamstress until her failing health prevented her from doing so (Weiser).

Sadly, there is much we do not know about Cathay Williams. For example, we do not know what she died from or where she was buried. Thankfully, history has not forgotten her. As a Buffalo Soldier and as a woman, Cathay Williams has left her mark for future generations.

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Source Three:
The Colored Cadet at West Point
by Henry Ossian Flipper

Note: Henry Ossian Flipper became the first African American to graduate from the military academy West Point. He also became the first African American officer to lead the buffalo soldiers.

There are some, indeed the majority of the corps are such, who treat me on all occasions with proper politeness. They are gentlemen themselves, and treat others as it becomes gentlemen to do. They do not associate, nor do they speak other than officially, except in a few cases. They are perhaps as much prejudiced as the others, but prejudice does not prevent all from being gentlemen. On the other hand, there are some from the very lowest classes of our population. They are uncouth and rough in appearance, have only a rudimentary education, have little or no idea of courtesy, use the very worst language, and in most cases are much inferior to the average negro. What can be expected of such people? They are low, and their conduct must be in keeping with their breeding. I am not at all surprised to find it so. Indeed, in ordinary civil life I should consider such people beneath me in the social scale, should even reckon some of them as roughs, and consequently give them a wide berth.

What surprises me most is the control this class seems to have over the other. It is in this class I have observed most prejudice, and from it, or rather by it, the other becomes tainted. It seems to rule the corps by fear. Indeed, I know there are many who would associate, who would treat me as a brother cadet, were they not held in constant dread of this class. The bullies, the fighting men of the corps are in it. It rules by fear, and whoever disobeys its beck is "cut." The rest of the corps follows like so many menials subject to command. In short, there is a fearful lack of backbone. There is, it seems at first sight, more prejudice at West Point than elsewhere. It is not really so I think.

The officers of the institution have never, so far as I can say, shown any prejudice at all. They have treated me with uniform courtesy and impartiality. The cadets, at least some of them, away from West Point, have also treated me with such gentlemanly propriety. The want of backbone predominates to such an alarming extent at West Point they are afraid to do so there. I will mention a few cases under this subject of treatment.

During my first-class camp I was rather surprised on one occasion to have a plebe-we had been to the Centennial Exhibition and returned, and of course my status must have been known to him-come to my tent to borrow ink of me. I readily complied with his request, feeling proud of what I thought was the beginning of a new era in my cadet life. I felt he would surely prove himself manly enough, after thus recognizing me, to keep it up, and thus bring others under his influence to the same cause. And I was still further assured in this when I observed he made his visits frequent and open. At length, sure of my willingness to oblige him, he came to me, and, after expressing a desire to "bone up" a part of the fourth- class course, and the need he felt for such "boning," begged me to lend him my algebra. I of course readily consented, gave him my key, and sent him to my trunk in the trunk rooms to get it. He went. He got it, and returned the key. He went into ecstasies, and made no end of thanks to me for my kindness, etc. All this naturally confirmed my opinion and hope of better recognition ultimately. Indeed, I was glad of an opportunity to prove that I was not unkind or ungenerous. I supposed he would keep the book till about September, at which time he would get one of his own, as every cadet at that time was required to procure a full course of text-books, these being necessary for reference, etc.,

in future life. And so he did. Some time after borrowing the book, he came to me and asked for India ink. I handed him a stick, or rather part of one, and received as usual his many thanks. Several days after this, and at night, during my absence-I was, if I remember aright, at Fort Clinton making a series of observations with a zenith telescope in the observatory there-he came to the rear of my tent, raised the wall near one corner, and placed the ink on the floor, just inside the wall, which he left down as he found it.

I found the ink there when I returned. I was utterly disgusted with the man. The low, unmanly way in which he acted was wholly without my approval. If he was disposed to be friendly, why be cowardly about it? If he must recognize me secretly, why, I would rather not have such recognition. Acting a lie to his fellow-cadets by appearing to be inimical to me and my interests, while he pretended the reverse to me, proved him to have a baseness of character with which I didn't care to identify myself.

September came at last, and my algebra was returned. The book was the one I had used my first year at the Academy. I had preserved it, as I have all of my books, for future use and as a sort of souvenir of my cadet life. It was for that sole reason of great value to me. I enjoined upon him to take care of the book, and in nowise to injure it. My name was on the back, on the cover, and my initial, "F," in two other places on the cover. When the book was returned he had cut the calfskin from the cover, so as to remove my name. The result was a horrible disfiguration of the book, and a serious impairment of its durability. The mere sight of the book angered me, and I found it difficult to refrain from manifesting as much. He undoubtedly did it to conceal the fact that the book was borrowed from me. Such unmanliness, such cowardice, such baseness even, was most disgusting; and I felt very much as if I would like to-well, I don't know that I would. There was no reason at all for mutilating the book. If he was not man enough to use it with my name on it, why did he borrow it and agree not to injure it? On that sole condition I lent it. Why did he not borrow some one else's and return mine?

I have been asked, "What is the general feeling of the corps towards you? Is it a kindly one, or is it an unfriendly one. Do they purposely ill-treat you or do they avoid you merely?" I have found it rather difficult to answer unqualifiedly such questions; and yet I believe, and have always believed, that the general feeling of the corps towards me was a kindly one. This has been manifested in multitudes of ways, on innumerable occasions, and under the most various circumstances. And while there are some who treat me at times in an unbecoming manner, the majority of the corps have ever treated me as I would desire to be treated. I mean, of course, by this assertion that they have treated me as I expected and really desired them to treat me, so long as they were prejudiced. They have held certain opinions more or less prejudicial to me and my interests, but so long as they have not exercised their theories to my displeasure or discomfort, or so long as they have "let me severely alone," I had no just reason for complaint. Again, others, who have no theory of their own, and almost no manliness, have been accustomed "to pick quarrels," or to endeavor to do so, to satisfy I don't know what; and while they have had no real opinions of their own, they have not respected those of others. Their feeling toward me has been any thing but one of justice, and yet at times even they have shown a remarkable tendency to recognize me as having certain rights entitled to their respect, if not their appreciation.

**Source Four:
National Park Service
"The Life of Charles Young"**

<http://www.nps.gov/av/mwr/avElement/chyo-ATriumphofTragedy-TheLifeofColonelCharlesYoung.mp4>

Informational Text Standard 1 – Grades 6-8

Informational Text Standard 7 – Grade 6

Westward Journey (pilot)

An American pioneer family's decision to move westward was certainly a brave one. What motivated families to make this decision? What were their fears? What conditions were they willing to endure to reach the possibilities of a new life in the West?

Read and analyze what the sources reveal about the experiences of American pioneer families moving westward. In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss the potential benefits and hazards of the journey westward for a pioneer family. Be sure to include and cite evidence from the sources to support your analysis of what the text says explicitly, as well as inferences you can draw from the text to support your ideas.

**Source 1:
Excerpt from "Gold Hunters of California: Life in California before the Gold Discovery"
by John Bidwell**

...Dr. Marsh's ranch, the first settlement reached by us in California, was located in the eastern foothills of the Coast Range Mountains, near the northwestern extremity of the great San Joaquin Valley and about six miles east of Monte Diablo, which may be called the geographical center of Contra Costa County. There were no other settlements in the valley; it was, apparently, still just as new as when Columbus discovered America, and roaming over it were countless thousands of wild horses, of elk, and of antelope. It had been one of the driest years ever known in California, The country was brown and parched; throughout the State wheat, beans, everything had failed. Cattle were almost starving for grass, and the people, except perhaps a few of the best families, were without bread, and were eating chiefly meat, and that often of a very poor quality. ...

We had already heard that a man by the name of Sutter was starting a colony a hundred miles away to the north in the Sacramento Valley. No other civilized settlements had been attempted anywhere east of the Coast Range; before Sutter came the Indians had reigned supreme. As the best thing to be done I now determined to go to Sutter's, afterward called "Sutter's Fort," or New Helvetia. Dr. Marsh said we could make the journey in two days, but it took us eight. Winter had come in earnest, and winter in California then, as now, meant rain. I had three companions. It was wet when we started, and much of the time we traveled through a pouring rain. Streams were out of their banks; gulches were swimming; plains were inundated; indeed, most of the country was overflowed. There were no roads, merely paths, trodden only by Indians and wild game. We were compelled to follow the paths, even when they were under water, for the moment our animals stepped to one side down they went into the mire. Most of the way was through the region now lying between Lathrop and Sacramento. We got out of

provisions and were about three days without food. Game was plentiful, but hard to shoot in the rain. Besides, it was impossible to keep our old flint-lock guns dry, and especially the powder dry in the pans. On the eighth day we came to Sutter's settlement; the fort had not then been begun. Nearly everybody who came to California made it a point to reach Sutter's Fort. Sutter was one of the most liberal and hospitable men. Everybody was welcome—one man or a hundred, it was all the same. He had peculiar traits: his necessities compelled him to take all he could buy, and he paid all he could pay; but he failed to keep up with his payments. And so he soon found himself immensely—almost hopelessly—involved in debt. His debt to the Russians amounted at first to something near one hundred thousand dollars. Interest increased apace. He had agreed to pay in wheat, but his crops failed. He struggled in every way, sowing large areas to wheat, increasing his cattle and horses, and trying to build a flouring mill. He kept his launch running to and from the bay, carrying down hides, tallow, furs, wheat, etc., returning with lumber sawed by hand in the redwood groves nearest the bay and other supplies. . . .

The ranch life was not confined to the country, it prevailed in the towns too. There was not a hotel in San Francisco, or Monterey, or anywhere in California, till 1846, when the Americans took the country. The priests at the Missions were glad to entertain strangers without charge. They would give you a room in which to sleep, and perhaps a bedstead with a hide stretched across it, and over that you would spread your blankets.

At this time there was not in California any vehicle except a rude California cart; the wheels were without tire, and were made by felling an oak tree and hewing it down till it made a solid wheel nearly a foot thick on the rim and a little larger where the axle went through. The hole for the axle would be eight or nine inches in diameter, but a few years' use would increase it to a foot. . . . These carts were always drawn by oxen, the yoke being lashed with rawhide to the horns. To lubricate the axles they used soap (that is one thing the Mexicans could make), carrying along for the purpose a big pail of thick soapsuds which was constantly put in the box or hole, but you could generally tell when a California cart was coming half a mile away by the squeaking. I have seen the families of the wealthiest people go long distances at the rate of thirty miles or more a day, visiting in one of these clumsy two-wheeled vehicles. They had a little framework around it made of round sticks, and a bullock hide was put in for a floor or bottom. Sometimes the better class would have a little calico for curtains and cover. There was no such thing as a spoked wheel in use then.

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Source 2 (A):
Excerpt from a letter dated March 14, 1838
by Narcissa Williams

... Flannel dresses for Alice Clarissa, shoes, etc. – in short, whatever of ready-made clothing for ourselves and babe you send us, will save so much of my time for teaching and writing, the latter of which I have a great deal to do, and, besides, my eyes suffer very much from weakness – more than formerly. Notwithstanding the winters here are mild, we find flannels very comfortable from the month of November to April. In the summer the heat is sometimes very great, and most of the time we require to wear very thin clothing. I mentioned in my letters last fall the articles of clothing most needed; probably you will not be able to send until you see this. In addition to what I then wrote, I would request that strong iron-bound casks or barrels be used for packing, instead of boxes.

The books, etc., sent by the Board last summer, were injured very considerably by the salt water. The only piece of flannel sent was nearly destroyed. They should not exceed 100 pounds weight, for the convenience of the portages, and besides we shall find a few barrels very convenient in housekeeping. Clothing well packed, even with crockery in the center, would come safe. Besides the portages, we are obliged to convey our supplies on horses to our stations, and to be able to do this without unpacking will save much time, expense and trouble. I thank Sister Jane very much for those numbers of the Mothers' Magazine. I should have done so before. Nothing can be more acceptable than regular numbers of such valuable publications. I am much pleased with W. A. Alcott's publications, what few numbers I have seen, and think them very useful, especially for mothers. ...

Source 2 (B):
Excerpt from a letter dated October 7, 1842
by Narcissa Williams

I got dreadfully frightened last night. About midnight I was awakened by some one trying to open my bedroom door. At first I did not know what to understand by it. I raised my head and listened awhile and then lay down again. Soon the latch was raised and the door opened a little. I sprang from the bed in a moment and closed the door again, but the ruffian pushed and pushed and tried to unlatch it, but could not succeed; finally he gained upon me until he opened the door again and as I suppose disengaged his blanket (at the same time I calling John) and ran as for his life. The east dining room door was open. I thought it was locked, but it appears that it was not. I fastened the door, lit a candle and went to bed trembling and cold, but could not rest until I had called John to bring his bed and sleep in the kitchen. It was in such a time that I found he was too far off. Had the ruffian persisted I do not know what I should have done. ...

Source 3:
Excerpt from "Thomas Jefferson to John Adams"
by Thomas Jefferson

...Before the revolution they were in the habit of coming often, and in great numbers to the seat of our government, very much with them. I knew much the great Outassetè, the warrior and orator of the Cherokees. He was always the guest of my father, on his journies to and from Williamsburg. I was in his camp when he made his great farewell oration to his people the evening before his departure for England. The moon was in full splendor, and to her he seemed to address himself in his prayers for his own safety on the voyage, and that of his people during his absence. His sounding voice, distinct articulation, animated action, and the solemn silence of his people at their several fires, filled me with awe and veneration, although I did not understand a word he uttered. That nation consisting now of about 2000 warriors, and the Creeks of about 3000 are far advanced in civilization. They have good cabins, inclosed fields, large herds of cattle and hogs, spin and weave their own clothes and cotton, have smiths and other of the most necessary tradesmen, write and read, are on the increase in numbers, and a branch of the Cherokees is now instituting a regular representative government. Some other tribes were advancing in the same line. On those who have made any progress, English seductions will have no effect. But the backward will yield, and be further thrown back. These will relapse into barbarism and misery, lose numbers by war and want, and we shall be obliged to drive them, with the beasts of the forest into the Stony mountains. They will be conquered however in Canada. The

possession of that country secures our women and children for ever from the tomahawk and scalping knife, by removing those who excite them; and for this indemnity for the past, security for the future...

Source 4:
Excerpt from "Jefferson's Instructions for Meriwether Lewis"
by Thomas Jefferson

In all your intercourse with the natives, treat them in the most friendly and conciliatory manner which their own conduct will admit; allay all jealousies as to the object of your journey, satisfy them of it's innocence, make them acquainted with the position, extent character, peaceable and commercial dispositions of the US, of our wish to be neighborly, friendly, and useful to them, and of our dispositions to a commercial intercourse with them; confer with them on the points most convenient as mutual emporiums, and the articles of most desirable interchange for them and us. If a few of their influential chiefs within their practicable distance, wish to visit us, arrange such a visit with them, and furnish them with authority to call on our officers, on their entering the US. To have them conveyed to this place at the public expense. If any of them should wish to have some of their young people brought up with us, and taught such arts as may be useful to them, we will receive, instruct, and take care of them. Such a mission whether of influential chiefs or of young people would give some security to your own party. Carry with you some matter of the kinpox; inform those of them with whom you may be, of it's efficacy as a preservative from the smallpox; and instruct and encourage them in the use of it. This may be especially done wherever you winter.

Sources 5-8:

https://www.myaccess.com/myaccess/itemImages/promptImages/Westward_Move_sources_5-8.pdf