Reading Reconsidered Curriculum Science Fiction Short Stories Fluency Practice

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**What is Fluency?**

Reading fluently means reading words accurately, at a speed that matches normal conversation, and with expression in order to understand the text. Fluent readers pay attention to:

* **Punctuation:** Which punctuation marks appear in the sentence? What clues does punctuation give you about when you should pause or how you should convey emotion?
* **Important words:** Are there any words that require special emphasis or give clues about the emotion of a sentence?
* **Dialogue:** How does the dialogue change what kind of expression you use? How is the person who is speaking feeling? What might they sound like?
* **The tone of the passage**: Are you capturing the intended meaning behind what you are reading? Are you capturing the voice of the narrator in your reading?

**Directions for students:**

1. Write your personal reading goal at the top of the page.
2. Listen to the teacher read aloud the set of sentences. Pay attention to when the teacher’s voice pauses or changes.
3. Now your teacher will call on students to read the sentences aloud.
4. Now reread the set of sentences with your partner.
   1. Partner 1 (reader) reads the first sentence.
   2. Partner 2 (listener) listens while following along with a ruler.
   3. Let the reader try to decode the words. If they are stuck, the listener can help after the reader has given it a try.
   4. If neither student can read the word, jot it in your ‘Words to Practice’ box.
5. Switch roles for the next sentence and continue alternating through the set of sentences.
6. Reread the set following the above directions 3-4 times.
7. Listen for your teacher’s directions to see which questions you will be answering on the back of your sheet.

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Words to Practice

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Science Fiction Short Stories

Set 1: Lesson 4 275 Total Words

Below are some sentences about the Cold War and the fear of Nuclear weapons to help you better understand the story in “There Will Come Soft Rains.”

1. In August of 1945, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending World War II.
2. An atomic bomb is a nuclear weapon which derives massive destructive force from nuclear reactions and is capable of devastating entire cities by blast, fire, and radiation.
3. Scientists worked for decades to understand and harness nuclear technology, and the creation of the atomic bomb was at the cutting edge of scientific advancement of the time.
4. Even though the United States and the Soviet Union had been allies during World War II, after the war ended, both nations maneuvered to increase their power and influence across the globe.
5. By 1947, the conflict between the U.S. and USSR was known as the Cold War, so named because it never escalated into open war between the two powers.
6. The term was first used by writer George Orwell in a 1945 article to refer to what he predicted would be a nuclear stalemate between “two or three monstrous super-states, each possessed of a weapon by which millions of people can be wiped out in a few seconds.
7. The Soviet Union detonated its first nuclear weapon in 1949, ending the United States’ monopoly on nuclear power.
8. Both governments spent massive amounts of money to increase the quantity and power of their nuclear arsenals.
9. Some historians believe that some form of Cold War between the two nations would have arisen whether or not the United States had dropped atomic bombs on Japan, but many see the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a turning point in the conflict between two superpowers.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 1: Lesson 4

Below are some questions about the passage you just read about the Cold War and nuclear anxiety.

1. What country did the United States bomb with nuclear weapons? Which cities?
2. What are some of the effects of nuclear weapons?
3. What two nations experienced tension during the Cold War?
4. Why do you think there was tension between these two nations? Find a line in the text that supports your answer.
5. What makes a Cold War different from other types of war?

1. Why is the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki significant for the Cold War?

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Words to Practice

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Science Fiction Short Stories

Set 2: Lesson 3 236 Total Words

Below is a passage from “Robbie” where Mrs. Weston scolds Gloria and Robbie.

Mrs. Weston caught sight of them the minute they rose above the masking tufts of long grass and retired inside the house to wait.

“I’ve shouted myself hoarse, Gloria,” she said, severely. “Where were you?”

“I was with Robbie,” quavered Gloria. “I was telling him Cinderella, and I forgot it was dinner-time.”

“Well, it’s a pity Robbie forgot, too.” Then, as if that reminded her of the robot’s presence, she whirled upon him. “You may go, Robbie. She doesn’t need you now.” Then, brutally, “And don’t come back till I call you.”

Robbie turned to go, but hesitated as Gloria cried out in his defense. “Wait, Mamma, you got to let him stay. I didn’t finish Cinderella for him. I said I would tell him Cinderella and I’m not finished.”

“Gloria!”

“Honest and truly, Mamma, he’ll stay so quiet, you won’t even know he’s here. He can sit on the chair in the corner, and he won’t say a word, I mean he won’t do anything. Will you Robbie?”

Robbie, appealed to, nodded his massive head up and down once.

“Gloria, if you don’t stop this at once, you shan’t see Robbie for a whole week.”

The girl’s eyes fell. “All right! But Cinderella is his favorite story and I didn’t finish it. – And he likes it so much.”

The robot left with a disconsolate step and Gloria choked back a sob.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 2: Lesson 3

Below are some questions from the passage you read from “Robbie.”

1. How would you describe Gloria and Robbie’s relationship based on this passage?
2. How do you think Mrs. Weston feels about Robbie? Find an example in the text that supports your answer.
3. Why might Mrs. Weston feel the way she does about Robbie?
4. What does Gloria suggest to Mrs. Weston to get her to allow Robbie to join them for dinner?
5. “Disconsolate,” as seen in section 4, means “unhappy,” “cheerless,” or “without comfort.” Use “disconsolate” in a sentence.
6. Do you think Gloria views Robbie as a robot? Why or why not?

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Words to Practice

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Science Fiction Short Stories

Set 3: Lesson 14 309 Total Words

Below are some sentences about Kurt Vonnegut, author of “Harrison Bergeron.”

1. Born on November 11, 1922, in Indianapolis, Indiana, Kurt Vonnegut is considered one of the most influential American novelists of the 20th century.
2. He blended realistic fiction with science fiction and humor, mixing the absurd with pointed social commentary.
3. He was known for his satirical novels which frequently used elements of fantasy and science fiction to highlight the horrors and ironies of 20th-century civilization.
4. His father, Kurt Sr., was one of the most prominent architects in Indianapolis, and his mother was the daughter of a wealthy brewer.
5. However, during the Great Depression, the fortunes of the family changed dramatically.
6. The family had to sell their home and take their children out of private schools. Vonnegut’s mother became addicted to alcohol and prescription drugs.
7. Kurt Jr.’s lifelong pessimism may have had its roots in his parents’ despairing response to being blindsided by the Depression.
8. In high school, Vonnegut wrote for the student newspaper, and he continued his interest in journalism at Cornell University.
9. Vonnegut would be influenced all his writing life by the simple rules of journalism: Get the facts right, compose straightforward declarative sentences, know the audience.
10. He was sent as a prisoner of war to Dresden, Germany. On February 13, 1945, British and American bombers destroyed the city by dropping explosives followed by firebombs, incendiary devices intended to cause massive fires.
11. The resulting firestorm turned the city into an inferno that killed up to 60,000 civilians.
12. Vonnegut and his fellow POWs survived by accident only because they were housed some 60 feet underground in a former meat locker and slaughterhouse.
13. Vonnegut’s job for weeks after the bombing was to gather up and burn the remains of the dead.
14. His experience at Dresden marked him for life and eventually resulted in his literary masterpiece, *Slaughterhouse-Five*.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 3: Lesson 14

Below are some questions from the sentences you just read about the author Kurt Vonnegut.

1. How does the passage describe the genre Kurt Vonnegut’s writing belongs to?
2. What may have contributed to the pessimism found in Vonnegut’s work?
3. What kind of writing was Vonnegut interested in during his high school and college years?
4. What are the “simple rules of journalism?” What purpose do they serve?
5. Where was Vonnegut sent during World War II? What happened while he was there?
6. What novel is considered Vonnegut’s masterpiece, and what was it inspired by?

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*Reading Reconsidered Curriculum Science Fiction Short Stories Fluency Practice*

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Words to Practice

My Goal: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Science Fiction Short Stories

Set 4: Lesson 12 272 Total Words

Below is a passage from “Flowers for Algernon” where Charlie is given the inkblot test a second time.



I was scared to death of those inkblots. I knew he was going to ask me to find the pictures and I knew I wouldn’t be able to. I was thinking to myself, if only there was some way of knowing what kind of pictures were hidden there. Maybe there weren’t any pictures at all. Maybe it was just a trick to see if I was dumb enough to look for something that wasn’t there.



Just thinking about that made me sore at him.

“All right, Charlie,” he said, “you seen these cards before, remember?”

“Of course I remember.”

The way I said it, he knew I was angry, and he looked surprised. “Yes, of course. Now I want you to look at this one. What might this be? What do you see on this card? People see all sorts of things in these inkblots. Tell me what it might be for you – what it makes you think of.”



I was shocked. That wasn’t what I had expected him to say at all. “You mean there are no pictures hidden in those inkblots?”

He frowned and took off his glasses. “What?”

“Pictures. Hidden in the inkblots. Last time you told me that everyone could see them and you wanted me to find them too.”



He explained to me that the last time he had used almost the exact same words he was using now. I didn’t believe it, and I still have the suspicion that he misled me at the time just for the fun of it. Unless – I don’t know anymore – could I have been *that* feeble-minded?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 4: Lesson 12

Below are some questions from the passage you read from “Flowers for Algernon.”

1. What is Charlie afraid of happening when he takes the inkblot test?
2. Describe Charlie’s voice after the doctor asks him if he remembers the inkblot test. Why does he respond that way?
3. What does the doctor actually want Charlie to do during the inkblot test?
4. Describe Charlie’s voice in section 3 when he says, “You mean there are no pictures hidden in those inkblots?” Why do you think he sounds that way?
5. Describe how you think Charlie feels in section 4. Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
6. What does “feeble-minded” mean? (see section 4) Write a sentence using “feeble-minded.”

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Words to Practice

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Sci-Fi Short Stories

Set 5: Lesson 20 261 Total Words

Below are some sentences about aliens in science fiction to help give context to Ursula K. Le Guin’s short story “Mazes.”

1. While most people know aliens as beings from outer space, the etymology of the word “alien” has a long history prior to that definition.
2. The word “alien” comes from the Latin word *alienus* meaning foreign, strange, or belonging to another.
3. In English, the meaning of the word has shifted over time.
4. Beginning in the 15th century, an “alien” was someone living in a different country from where they were born.
5. In the 1670s, the word alien became used to describe something different or unusual.
6. The related verb, alienate, means to cause someone to feel isolated or separate.
7. The first recorded use of the term to mean “not of this Earth” was in 1920, and it became widely used to describe extraterrestrials or beings from other planets in the 1950s.
8. In science fiction, early depictions of beings from other planets typically resembled humans.
9. Some writers used the idea of aliens to create utopian societies, critiquing life on Earth by presenting a more peaceful and evolved alternative on another planet.
10. In the nineteenth century, however, writers began to imagine aliens attacking Earth.
11. In “War of the Worlds” by H.G. Wells, aliens from Mars invade England and attempt to conquer the human race.
12. By the twentieth century, aliens were extremely popular in science fiction and continue to feature in literature, cinema, and TV shows.
13. Other popular alien characters, such as E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, remain a recognizable part of pop culture and challenge the idea that aliens are a threat to humanity.

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Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 5: Lesson 20

Below are some questions from the sentences you just read about aliens in science fiction.

1. From what language does the word “alien” originate? What was its original meaning?
2. What had the term “alien” come to mean between the 15th and 17th centuries?
3. What does it mean for something to be “extraterrestrial?”
4. What is a “utopian society?” What point do authors often want to make when writing about utopias?
5. What kind of aliens were featured in H.G. Wells’ novel *War of the Worlds*?
6. What makes characters like E.T. different from aliens like the ones H.G. Wells wrote about?

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Words to Practice

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Science Fiction Short Stories

Set 6: Lesson 16 294 Total Words

Below is the passage from “Harrison Bergeron,” in which Harrison interrupts a TV broadcast.

Clanking, clownish, and huge, Harrison stood in the center of the studio. The knob of the uprooted studio door was still in his hand. Ballerinas, technicians, musicians, and announcers cowered on their knees before him, expecting to die.

“I am the Emperor!” cried Harrison. “Do you hear? I am the Emperor! Everybody must do what I say at once!” He stamped his foot and the studio shook.

“Even as I stand here—” he bellowed, “crippled, hobbled, sickened—I am a greater ruler than any man who ever lived! Now watch me become what I *can* become!”

Harrison tore the straps of his handicap harness like wet tissue paper, tore straps guaranteed to support five thousand pounds.

Harrison’s scrap-iron handicaps crashed to the floor. Harrison thrust his thumbs under the bar of the padlock that secured his head harness. The bar snapped like celery. Harrison smashed his headphones and spectacles against the wall.



He flung away his rubber-ball nose, revealed a man that would have awed Thor, the god of thunder.

“I shall now select my Empress!” he said, looking down on the cowering people. “Let the first woman who dares rise to her feet claim her mate and her throne!”

A moment passed, and then a ballerina arose, swaying like a willow.

Harrison plucked the mental handicap from her ear, snapped off her physical handicaps with marvelous delicacy. Last of all, he removed her mask.

She was blindingly beautiful.

“Now,” said Harrison, taking her hand, “shall we show the people the meaning of the word dance? Music!” he commanded.

The musicians scrambled back into their chairs, and Harrison stripped them of their handicaps, too. “Play your best,” he told them, “and I’ll make you barons and dukes and earls.”

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Reading Comprehension Questions

Set 6: Lesson 16

Below are some questions from the passage you read from “Harrison Bergeron.”

1. Describe how Harrison seems to move before removing the handicap devices. Find a place in the text that supports your response.
2. What kind of behavior does Harrison use to intimidate the people at the TV studio?
3. What do you think the purpose of the handicap devices is?
4. Describe Harrison’s voice when he asks for a woman to stand up and take the throne with him.
5. Why do you think Harrison wants to show the audience “the meaning of the word dance?”
6. Harrison offers to make people into royalty, like dukes and earls. What does he ask for in return?