Pre-Assessment for Standards Assessed in Both Units 1 and 2—ELA 6th grade

Directions: Read the story below. After, answer the questions about the story. Write the answers on a separate sheet of paper.

The Fish Story by Mary Lou Brooks

I know what I’m going to be when I grow up – unemployed. “Face it, Ernie,” my dad always says. “The way you mess up every job, you have a great future – as a bum.”

He’s probably right. My first summer job was cutting the neighbor’s lawn. The mower got away from me and ate ten tomato plants. Another time, I forgot to close the windows when I washed Mr. Hammer’s car. The weeds I pulled out of Mrs. Miller’s garden turned out to be flowers.

So I was really surprised when the Bensons asked me to look after their house while they were away on vacation. The Bensons are new on the block. I guess they hadn’t heard about me yet.

“We’re leaving on Monday,” explained Mrs. Benson. “You’ll start Tuesday. Just bring in the newspapers and the mail.” That didn’t sound too hard. Even I could probably handle this job.

“And feed Jaws once a day,” Mrs. Benson added.

“Jaws?” I gulped. Did they have a pet shark or something?

Mrs. Benson laughed. “That’s what the twins named their goldfish.”

On Tuesday, I had baseball practice. So I was late getting to the Bensons’. I put the mail and the newspaper on the hall table. Then I headed for the fishbowl. Jaws was floating on top of the water.

I moaned. My first day on the job, and I killed the dumb fish! Not even the Army would want me now. That’s what my dad would say – after he stopped yelling.

“Now wait a minute, Ernie,” I said to myself. This little fellow could still be alive. His eyes were open. He could be in a coma. I bent down very close to the water.

“Jaws!” I yelled. “It’s me, Ernie, your babysitter. If you can hear me, blink once.” He didn’t.

I touched him with my finger. He was cold, stiff, and very slimy. “Face it, Ernie,” I thought out loud. “This is one dead fish you have here.”

That night, I lay awake a long time trying to figure out why that dumb fish died. I didn’t overfeed him. I never had a chance to feed him at all.

When I finally fell asleep, I had a nightmare. The shark from Jaws was chasing me. He was wearing a six-shooter. “You bumped off my kinfolk,” he yelled. “Draw!”

I didn’t tell my parents about Jaws. Every day, I went over to the Benson’s as though nothing was wrong. I had until Sunday. That’s when the Bensons were coming home. Why rush things?

On Saturday, I remembered that Jaws was still in the fishbowl. I was about to toss him in the garbage. Suddenly, I had a great idea. I slipped Jaws into a baggie and ran to the nearest pet store.

“I’d like another goldfish exactly like this one,” I told the owner. Then I held up the baggie.

The owner glared at me. Half an hour later, he was still glaring. That’s how long it took to find a perfect match. I paid the owner and headed to the Benson’s house.

When I got there, I cleaned the fishbowl and added fresh water. Soon Jaws II was in his new home. But instead of swimming around, he just stared at me.

“What you did was wrong,” those tiny eyes seemed to say.
The Bensons arrived home at 1:55 Sunday afternoon. I watched from my bedroom window as they piled out of their car. At 2:13, my mom called up the stairs.

“Ernie,” she said, “Mrs. Benson is here.” Caught! I trudged down the stairs to face the music. Mrs. Benson was sitting at the kitchen table with my parents. “Here’s the boy behind the Great Goldfish Switch,” she said.

I felt like running. But Mrs. Benson put her arm around my shoulder.

“That was very thoughtful, Ernie,” she said. “Monday was so crazy I didn’t have time to pick up another fish. I’ve been dreading telling the twins that Jaws died. Thanks to you, I won’t have to.

She handed me money in an envelope. “This is for house-sitting,” she said. “There’s extra for the new Jaws. You hear so many wild stories about kids these days. It’s nice to know one who is responsible.”

Mom looked so proud I thought she might cry. But dad had a funny look on his face. I think he was trying not to laugh.

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**The Fish Story – Questions**

1. Which event causes a conflict for Ernie on his new job?
   A. forgetting to feed Jaws
   B. mowing over ten tomato plants
   C. finding Jaws floating on top of the water
   D. meeting the Bensons when they return from vacation

2. The setting of the story is
   A. the Bensons’ vacation home
   B. a neighborhood
   C. a fishing village
   D. a local pet store

3. The climax of the story occurs when
   A. Ernie goes downstairs to see Mrs. Benson and “face the music”
   B. The new fish stares at Ernie with “those tiny black eyes”
   C. Ernie dreams about “the shark from Jaws”
   D. The weeds Ernie pulled up “turned out to be flowers”

4. What conflict does Ernie face after he buys the new fish?
   A. He feels guilty for replacing Jaws
   B. The new fish doesn’t look like Jaws
   C. He is sorry he took the job at the Bensons
   D. He wants to keep the new fish for himself

5. What do you learn about Ernie in the exposition of the story?
   A. He does not want to work when he grows up
   B. He has messed up several jobs
   C. He would like to go on vacation
   D. He loves to take care of fish

6. You can infer that Mrs. Benson dreads telling the twins that the goldfish died because they might
   A. refuse to believe her
   B. figure it out for themselves
   C. get upset at the news
   D. blame Ernie for its death

7. Which event happens in the resolution of the story?
   A. Ernie buys a new fish
   B. Ernie’s mom is proud of him
   C. The Bensons offer Ernie a job
   D. Ernie accepts the death of the fish

8. Which event occurs during the rising action & increases the tension in the story?
   A. Ernie goes to baseball practice before he goes to the Bensons’ house
   B. Ernie’s dad looks like he has to keep himself laughing
   C. The pet store owner takes a long time to find a matching fish
   D. Mrs. Benson hands Ernie an envelope with money in it
9. When Ernie thinks, “Even I could probably handle this job,” you can infer that
A. he is proud of his reputation
B. he is unsure of himself
C. he wants to impress Mrs. Benson
D. he feels lucky to have a job

10. Which phrases in the story help you identify the order of events?
A. wait a minute, once a day, headed for
B. on Tuesday, on Saturday, at 2:13
C. blink once, long time, nearest let store
D. going to be, coming home, getting

VOCABULARY

Directions: Use context clues and your knowledge of synonyms to answer the following questions.

Which word is a synonym for the underlined word in the following sentence?

11. “I’ve been dreading telling the twins that Jaws died.”
A. anticipating
B. avoiding
C. fearing
D. planning

12. “The owner glared at me.”
A. looked
B. scowled
C. gawked
D. gazed

13. “I trudged down the stairs to face the music.”
A. clumped
B. galloped
C. crept
D. stole

Directions: Use context clues and your knowledge of base words and suffixes to answer the following questions.

14. What is the meaning of the word exactly as used below?
“I’d like another goldfish exactly like this one,” I told the owner.
A. in every way
B. greater than
C. somewhat
D. almost

15. What is the meaning of the underlined word in the sentence below?
“’That was very thoughtful of you, Ernie,’ she said.”
A. acting with strong purpose
B. having many thoughts on a subject
C. performing a task carelessly
D. showing concern for others
CRITICAL THINKING
16. Based off the events in this story, what characteristics best describe Ernie’s personality?
   a. Impulsive, unpredictable, and hyper
   b. Indecisive, unreliable, and forgetful
   c. Hard working, thoughtful, and sensitive
   d. Shy, loner, and unfriendly

17. What does the figurative language, “face the music,” mean in this story?
   a. The Ernie needs to confess to his actions and explain himself.
   b. That Ernie needs to sign up for singing lessons.
   c. There was music playing as Ernie walked down stairs.
   d. Ernie should find a song that explains his feelings.

18. What do you think Ernie’s biggest fear is?
   a. That his mother would be angry with him.
   b. That he would fail at another summertime job, which meant that his neighbors would never hire him again.
   c. That the twins would know that Jaws was replaced.
   d. That he would be attacked by Jaws.

19. What is the theme of this story?
   a. Sometimes you have to make hard decisions in life. Think long and hard about them and then do what you think is best.
   b. Play tricks on other people to make them laugh. Laughter is the best medicine.
   c. Always plan ahead and set goals.
   d. You have to work hard to be successful in life.

20. What important events in the story lead up to Ernie’s nightmare about the shark from the movie Jaws?
   a. He failed at multiple summer time jobs, such as car washing and mowing lawns.
   b. He watched the movie Jaws after taking care of the Benson’s house.
   c. The twins came home to find their fish swimming happily in the bowl.
   d. The first time he went to the Benson’s house he realized the fish was dead and wasn’t sure what he should do.

How to Care for that Carnival Goldfish

It’s a summertime rite of passage for many families: You take your child to the local carnival, he wins a game … and you’re stuck with a sickly-looking goldfish in a plastic bag. Your kid declares that little Nemo is his new best friend. Days later, he finds the fish floating on its side, leaving him devastated.
Luckily, there are steps you can take to keep that carnival goldfish alive. But before reading, consider this: Goldfish can live more than 20 years—long after your child has gone off to college!

**Drive carefully**
Try to avoid bumps or heavy braking on the ride home from the carnival. Bouncing around can cause stressful vibrations that could break down the goldfish’s immune system and cause disease.

**Watch the water**
Chlorinated tap water, bottled or distilled water, or water that is too acidic or alkaline can kill a goldfish. So buy a solution at a pet store that removes chlorine, adds nutrients or minerals, or measures acidity. Try to keep the water at about 70 degrees. You will also need a filtering system to remove waste, which contains ammonia that is toxic to the fish.

**Buy the right home for the fish**
If you’re a new goldfish owner, purchase a 2- to 5-gallon plastic aquarium kit with a filter, air pump, and chlorine remover.

**Release the fish carefully**
Place the fish in its bag in the tank before releasing it to reduce stress.

**Take cover**
Unless you want your pet to commit goldfish suicide, keep the tank covered at all times!

**Let in the light**
Goldfish need natural sunlight to keep their colors from fading.

**Feed the fish daily**
We know how easy it can be to forget to feed a pet that doesn’t bark or meow when it’s starving. But don’t forget to treat your goldfish to flakes or pellets every day. For a real treat, let it sometimes snack on freeze-dried worms, beef heart, brine shrimp, or algae.

**Change the water weekly**
Luckily, you’ll only need to change 10 percent each week—and you won’t have to move the fish.

**Be a good housekeeper**
Change the filter medium and clean the gravel regularly. If you have a power filter, change the filter container every few months. You should also clean the sides of the bowl or tank with baking soda—never soap—every few weeks, placing the fish in a cup or separate bowl while you clean.

**Sources:** Associated Press, American Goldfish Association, eHow.com
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COMPREHENSION/CRITICAL THINKING: HOW TO CARE FOR GOLDFISH

21) What was most likely the author’s purpose in writing this article?
   a) To discuss the benefits of having goldfish as a pet.
   b) To persuade readers to take care of their goldfish.
   c) To entertain readers with a story about winning a goldfish at a fair.
   d) To educate the reader on how to care for a goldfish.

22) Choose one quote from the article “How to Care for Your Carnival Goldfish” that best provides evidence you chose the correct answer for number 21.

23) Read the following sentence from the passage.

   “But before reading, consider this: Goldfish can live more than 20 years—long after your child has gone off to college!”

   The word consider most likely means:
   a) think carefully
   b) research thoroughly
   c) discuss with someone
   d) read about

24) What can you infer from reading the following sentence from the passage?

   “Unless you want your pet to commit goldfish suicide, keep the tank covered at all times!”

   a) Goldfish tanks are easily tipped over.
   b) Goldfish thrive in the darkness.
   c) Goldfish have a tendency to leap out of the water.
   d) Goldfish are easily depressed in small surroundings.

25) What detail from the passage best demonstrates that goldfish are sensitive animals?

   a) Luckily, you’ll only need to change 10 percent each week—and you won’t have to move the fish.
   b) Goldfish can live more than 20 years—long after your child has gone off to college!
   c) Bouncing around can cause stressful vibrations that could break down the goldfish’s immune system and cause disease.
   d) You will also need a filtering system to remove waste, which contains ammonia that is toxic to the fish.

SHORT ANSWER

26) After reading “How to Care for your Carnival Goldfish,” what conclusions can you draw about why Jaws, the Bensons’ fish, died in “A Fish Story”? Write a paragraph in response. Use evidence from the story and the article in your answer.