
Benchmark Passage
Fiction

Word Count: 236

Bath Time for Rick

Rick was playing with his balloon.
His dad came in and said, "It's time for a bath."

"Okay, Dad," said Rick.

Nick raced to the bathroom and got ready for his bath.

Rick climbed into the bathtub.

The water felt really warm.

"I need help," said Rick.

"I always get soap in my eyes."

Dad put soap on a cloth and washed Rick's face.

Rick liked when his dad helped.

"Okay, I'm clean!" said Rick.

'Not yet! What about washing your toes?" asked Dad.

"Okay, Dad," said Rick.

He sat back down.

He put soap on the cloth and washed his toes.

"I think I'm all done," said Rick.

Dad said, "Not yet! What about washing your knees and elbows"?

He put more soap on the cloth and gave it to Rick.

Rick took the cloth and scrubbed his knees.

Then he scrubbed his elbows.

He turned to his dad and said, " Now I'm all done!"

"Not yet," said Dad.

"What about washing behind your ears."

"I can't," said Rick.

"Can you help me?"

"Yes," said his dad.

“There! You are done!”

Rick’s mom opened the door.

“You look very clean,” she said.

Now it’s time to go to sleep.

But first you need to brush your teeth.”

Rick brushed his teeth.

He put on his pajamas and climbed into his bed.

Dad turned on the nightlight and gave Rick a kiss.

“Good night,” said Rick.

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 145

Balloons

Look at all the balloons!
Some balloons are small and some of them
are big.

All of these balloons are made from
something called latex.
Latex can stretch.
Some balloons are shiny.
They come in lots of colors, just like a
rainbow.

What's inside a balloon?
Balloons are like bubbles.
Balloons are filled with air.
Little balloons have a little air inside.
Big balloons have more air inside.
The girl holds the balloon in her hands.

She takes a very big breath.
She blows and blows the air into the
balloon.

Here is a gigantic balloon.
The balloon is as long as a bus.
It has lots of air inside.
Balloons can have different shapes.
These balloons are floating in a parade.
Don't forget to hold on to a balloon.
If you don't hold on . . .
. . . it will float away!

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 203

Planes

A lot of planes are in the air.
They fly to many different places.
They are used in different ways.

This is a sea plane.
Sea planes can take off and land on water.
They have floats on the bottom of the plane.
Floats keep the plane above the water.

This plane is a tanker.
It helps to put out fires.
Tankers can hold water.
They have a long hose to suck up the water.
Then the tanker drops the water onto the fire.

This is a jet plane.
It can fly very high and very fast.
Jets can be big or small.
The biggest jets are called jumbo jets.

This plane is a passenger plane.
It can fly many people all over the world.
It can carry their bags and their pets, too!

This plane does not have power.
It's called a glider because it glides through the
air.
It has long thin wings.
This plane can't fly as far as a jet.

This is a paper airplane.
You fold a sheet of paper again and again.
Paper airplanes are just for fun!

All kinds of planes are in the air.
Some planes are for work.
And some planes are for play.

Benchmark Passage
Fiction

Word Count: 307

The Birthday Party

Jen was excited because she was going to a birthday party!

But she was also a little worried.

She had never been on roller skates before.

All of Jen's friends were invited to the party, too.

Jen said, "See you at Meg's party!"

But she was still worried.

Mom told Jen that the party was at a roller rink.

"What's a roller rink", asked Jen.

"It's like a house with a big floor that you skate on," said Mom.

Jen wasn't really listening

because she was worrying.

“What if I fall down?” she thought.

“What if I can’t skate and I fall?”

Mom held up Jen’s favorite bike helmet.

“Do you want to wear your bike helmet?”

Mom asked.

Jen always wore it when she rode her bike.

Jen did want to wear the helmet.

But she was worried.

“I don’t think anyone will be wearing one of those,” Jen told her mom.

“I don’t want my friends to laugh at me.

“I can’t wear it.”

“That’s fine,” said Mom.

“Get Meg's present.

I’ll zip up your backpack.”

“Have fun,” Mom said.

“I will,” Jen answered.

But she was still a little worried.

All of Jen's friends were at the roller rink.
They put on their skates and tied them up.
Music was playing.
Then it was time to skate.
Everyone stood up.

Dan opened his backpack and pulled out his helmet.

"I need to wear this," said Dan.

I've never skated before.

Josh opened his backpack.

"I have mine, too!" he said.

Meg had her helmet.

I always wear my helmet! she said.

"I wish I had mine," Jen thought.

Meg said, "Jen, are you going skating with us?"

"Sure," said Jen.

She opened her backpack to look for Meg's present.

**“What’s this?” said Jen.
It was her helmet!**

Now she could skate with her friends!

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 231

All About Cheetahs

This is a cheetah.
It comes from Africa.

Cheetahs live in open grasslands.
They have long, strong legs.
Their legs help them run fast.
They are the fastest land animal in the world.

Cheetahs have tan fur.
They have black spots all over their body.
They are hard to see because their spotted
bodies blend in with the tall, dry grass.
They have small heads and ears.
Below their eyes, they have black marks that
look like tears.

Cheetahs don't see well at night so they sleep.
They hunt for food in the day.
They eat meat and drink water.

Cheetahs don't have sharp claws so can't climb trees.

These are baby cheetahs.

A mother cheetah will have three or more babies.

A baby cheetah is called a cub, just like a baby bear.

When a cub is born, it is blind.

It's covered with a thick coat of fur called a mantle.

The mantle helps the cubs blend into the tall grass.

When they are born a cub drinks its mother's milk.

In a few weeks they begin eating meat.

They follow their mother when she hunts.

Soon they are as big as their mother.

Cheetahs "talk" to each other.

They purr and make chirping sounds.

Cheetahs have a problem today.

There aren't as many cheetahs now as before.

Many people want to give them a safe place to live.

Benchmark Passage
Fiction

Word Count: 332

The Best Dog

Andy wanted a dog more than anything in the world. He wanted a dog that would sleep in his room and lick his face and be his very best friend.

“I really want a dog,” Andy said.

Please, can I have one?”

“I’m not sure,” his father answered.

“Taking care of a dog is hard work.”

“I’ll take good care of him,” said Andy.

“I promise. I’ll feed him and give him water every day and walk him.”

“All right,” said his father.

“Let’s go to Mr. Brown’s Farm.

Maybe we can get a dog there.”

Andy and his dad went to Mr. Brown’s Farm.

Lots of animals lived on the farm.

There were pigs and goats near the barn.

Farmer Brown was really friendly.

And there were dogs everywhere!

Andy had never seen so many dogs and puppies!

“How will you choose your dog?” asked Andy’s father.

Andy thought about it.

Then he said, “I’ll just choose the best one for me.”

Andy saw a white dog playing near the fence.

“I like your soft fur,” said Andy.

“Will you be my dog?”

The dog ducked under the fence.

“I guess you’re not the best dog for me,” said Andy.

“I’ll look for another dog.”

Andy watched another dog licking her paw down by the field.

“I like your wagging tail and your pink tongue,” said Andy.

“Will you be my dog?”

The dog didn’t even look at Andy.

“I can see that you are not the best dog for me,” Andy said.

“I’ll look for another dog.”

Andy sat by a tree and looked around.

He was worried.

“There are so many dogs.

But is there a dog for me?” he asked.

Andy heard a loud bark.

He looked down and saw a tiny puppy looking back at him.

The dog put his paw on Andy's foot.

He barked and barked.

Andy didn't choose a dog after all.

A dog chose Andy!

And he was the **best** dog for him!

Benchmark Passage

Word Count: 407

Fiction

New Neighbors

On Saturday afternoon, Glen saw an envelope by the front door.

"Mom, Dad, Molly!" he called.

"Look what I found!"

Dad read the blue note that was inside.

Hello Neighbors,

We just moved into the green house down the street. Please come to for a visit next Saturday at 4 o'clock. We want to meet you and we want to share our surprise.

Matt and Peg

"Surprise?" Everyone looked at one another.

"What could be the surprise?" asked Dad.

"I hope it's a large poodle," said Molly.

"When I get home from school, I can take it for a walk."

"I hope it's a swimming pool," said Glen.
"Maybe they'll let us swim."

"Well," said Mom, "that house down the street is just right for a pool. It has a long backyard. And there's that big fence all around."
"Look," said Glen. "The neighbors are reading a note, too!"

Mom and Dad called across the street.
"Did you get the note about the surprise?" Mom asked.
"What do you think it's all about?" Dad asked the neighbor.
"I don't know," she said.
"Do you think it's a swimming pool?" asked Glen.
She answered, "The yard is big enough for a pool, but I haven't seen one."

Another neighbor looked across his garden.
"I can tell you something else," he said.
"Each day when I go by that house I hear loud noises, like someone is banging."

Everyone was excited about the mystery.

On Saturday afternoon, everyone walked to the house down the street.

Glen pointed to a sign on the mailbox.

"What does it say?" Glen asked.

Missy read it to him.

Welcome Neighbors,

**Are you ready to learn our surprise?
Please walk around to the garage.**

Matt and Peg

They walked around to the side.

They saw all the neighbors standing in front of the garage.

In the middle were a man and a woman.

"Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Matt," said the man.

"And I'm Peg," said the woman.

"We're so very happy to meet our neighbors.

I guess you've been wondering about our surprise," she added.

"We sure have!" said Glen.

Peg grinned. "Well, our surprise is in the garage."

Matt opened the garage door.

“It’s a really old fire engine!” cried Glen.

“We found this fire engine in the garage,” said Matt.

“Peg and I have been fixing it up as a surprise for our new neighbors.

Now, who wants to take a ride?”

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 333

Not Just Pets

Do you know anyone who has a pet cat?
Perhaps you have a cat in your family.
Not all cats are pets.

Two Kinds of Cats

Some cats live in people's houses.
Some cats live in the woods, deserts, or grasslands.
Cats that live with people are called domestic cats.
Cats that don't need human help to live are called wild cats.

Domestic Cats

Domestic cats can help people feel good.
People feel good when they can pet a cat.
Sometimes people can't stay at home because they have to work.
They miss their cat when they are away from home.
Their cat is a member of their family.
People like to pet cats and feel their soft, shiny fur.
Domestic cats cheer people up by rubbing against their legs and purring.

Max is a happy and cuddly cat.
He jumps up on the windowsill.
He lays in the warm sun and goes to sleep.

Molly is a playful cat.
Her owner gives her plenty of toys to bat around.
Molly stays very still when she is petted.

Wild Cats

You hardly see these cats in the wild.
They don't want to be with people.
They run away and hide when people are near.
There are many different types of wild cats.
But all wild cats hunt for their food and eat meat.

A tiger is the largest cat in the world.
Tigers are great swimmers and can swim for miles.
Tigers hunt for food alone at night.
Most tigers have more than 100 stripes!
No two tigers' stripes are the same.

A lion is another big, wild, cat.
Like tigers, lions hunt at night and eat meat.
But lions like to hunt together.
The female lions do most of the hunting.

The male lions keep watch and protect the young cubs.

Male lions have fur around their necks called manes.
Lions spend most of the day napping!

Domestic and wild cats are part of the same family,
but they are very different.

Benchmark Passage
Fiction

Word Count: 471

Benji's Birthday Cake

"Good morning, peanut," Mom said.

She was talking to Benji's sister, May.

Then she turned to Benji.

"Good morning, smiley," she said to her grumpy son.

He could tell that his mom was only joking, but Benji did not laugh or smile.

Instead, he pushed back his chair and said, "I'm not smiley.

I'm BENJI!

See?

I'm not wearing a smile."

"Why, I think you are right," answered Mom.

"I don't know how I could have thought you were smiley."

"I know," exclaimed Mom.

"We just baked you a birthday cake!"

"We just have to frost it."

Mom pulled out the baking supplies and sat Benji at the table.

Then she was ready to mix the frosting.

Plop! Mom dropped the sugar into the bowl.

Plop! She added some butter.

Then she tossed in white and red food coloring.

"Pretty," said May.

"It doesn't look right," said Benji.

"That's pink! I don't want a pink cake."

Plop! went Mom.

She added some blue.

"Now it's turned purple," Mom complained.

"Let's see if I can fix it."

Plop! Plop!

"It's still not right, said Benji. "Let me add a few drops of green."

Ben and his mom took turns adding colors and stirring, but the more they added, the worse things got.

Benji's frosting got more and more icky.

"We'd better quit," said Mom.

Benji agreed.

"If we don't, my cake will look like it's covered in mud!" he said.

"Oh, no!" cried Benji a minute later.

"My friends will laugh at my cake!

Is there anything we can do to fix it?"

"It's a good thing they can't see it now!" said May.

Then Benji remembered something.

"Mom, remember the tiny cars I had when I was little?"

"Oh, those old things!" Mom said.

She went to Benji's closet and dug deep until she got all the way to the back.

Finally she pulled out a box and opened it.

"What's that?" asked May.

"Some old junk?"

"They're Benji's tiny cars," Mom explained.

"He used to play with these all the time."

"Really?" said May.

"Benji wants those on his cake?"

"We'll wash them first," said Mom.

For a long time, Benji thought about how to place his cars on his cake.

He wanted them to look right.

He wanted his friends to think his cake was cool.

He wanted the cake to make his friends hungry.

At last, he placed the cars on his cake.

“Mom!” Benji called.

“Come and tell me what you think.”

“Well,” said Mom.

“It looks like your cars crashed into each other.”

“I know,” said Benji.

“I think my friends will think it’s cool!”

“I think it’s time to drive to the store,” said Mom.

“We have to find you a new cake.”

“Okay,” announced Benji. “But this time, I get to pick the colors!”

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 573

Surprising Senses

Introduction

Think about what happens when your Mom and Dad tell you its time for dinner.

You can hear them telling you to wash your hands.

You can feel the soap and water on your skin.

You can smell what's cooking and see your chair at the table.

You can taste the food on your plate.

There are five senses that both people and many animals have.

You will read how these five senses (hearing, touch, smell, sight, and taste) help people and animals make sense of the world around them.

Hearing

Your teachers whisper a secret to you.

How do you hear what they are saying?

You use your sense of hearing.

We use our ears to hear.

Moths hear the best of any animal in the world.

They can hear sounds that we miss.

And, their ears are tiny, about the size of the top of a pin.

Touch

If your eyes are closed, how can you tell the difference between a soft cat and rough sandpaper?

You use your sense of touch.

We use our skin to touch.

Seals do, too.

But seals also use their whiskers! The touch of the whiskers helps seals know when a fish is near. They can feel the water moving.

Smell

Do you like the smell of fresh popcorn?

Most people do.

Your sense of smell tells you that popcorn smells good.

We use our noses to smell.

Not all animals have noses.

An ant's sense of smell is super sharp.

But it does not have a nose. Instead, it smells by wiggling its antennae.

Sight

You see a picture of two people.

How can you tell who is the father and who is the child?

You use your sense of sight.

Some animals do not have eyes.

The star-nosed mole lives its life under the ground, in the dark.

The mole uses its snout to find its way in the dark.

Taste

How can you tell if you like spinach?

You use your sense of taste.

You use your tongue to taste.

Your tongue has thousands of taste buds.

Catfish have ten times more taste buds than people.

They have small hairs on their bodies that help them taste their food before they eat it!

Great Senses

Some animals have great senses that are much, much stronger than our senses.

Great Sight

An eagle has great eyesight.

It can find food on the ground while it is flying high in the sky.

It can spot a rabbit from more than a mile away.

Great Smell

A lemon shark has a great sense of smell.
It depends on its sense of smell to find food.
It can smell a tiny drop of blood in the water
hundreds of feet away.

Great Hearing

Bats can not see in the dark.
They must use their ears at night to tell where they
are flying.
Bats make a high sound that echoes when it bounces
off walls and other surfaces.
Bats listen to the echo to know where they are.

You do not hear the way a moth does.
You do not touch in the same way a seal does.
You do not smell in the same way an ant does.
You do not see the way a mole does.
And you do not taste in the same way a catfish
does.

But, like other animals, your senses help you make
sense of the world around you.

Benchmark Passage
Nonfiction

Word Count: 565

Rulers of the Deep

Animal Jaws

What animal has the strongest jaws on the planet?

Is it a tiger?

Is it a bear?

The animal with the strongest jaw lives in the sea.

Its jaws are much stronger than a tigers or a bears.

It is the bull shark, a ruler of the deep.

Bull sharks bite harder than other, larger sharks.

There are over 400 different sharks in the sea.

They have lived in the sea since dinosaurs roamed the earth.

Shark Sizes

Other sharks have strong jaws, too.

They may be different colors and different sizes, but they all have strong jaws.

The smallest, the dwarf lantern shark, is about as long as a pencil.

The largest, the whale shark, grows to 60 feet long!

A whale shark eats only small fish and plankton.

It will not hurt humans.

The great white shark is about 20 feet long.

Great whites will bite people.

Breathing and Diving

You have lungs.

You breathe through your nose or mouth.

Many sharks breathe by swimming with their mouths open.

This allows the water to pass over their gills.

Sharks are fish and breathe through the use of gills.

Gills are slit-like openings on the sides of their head.

Most sharks must keep swimming.

If they stay still they will drown.

Some sharks dive deep down into the sea where there is no sunlight.

Others always stay near the surface.

Baby Sharks

A baby shark is called a pup.

There are many different kinds of sharks, and three different ways that pups are born.

1. Eggs are laid (like birds)
2. Eggs hatch inside the mother and then are born
3. Pup sharks grow inside the mother (like humans)

Sharks with pups that grow inside the mother do not have as many pups as sharks that lay eggs outside the body.

Sharks do not care for their pups after they are born.

But, they do search for a safe place to lay their eggs or give birth.

As soon as the pups are born, they swim away and care for themselves.

Shark Talk

Sharks are not able to make sounds in their throat.

But, they communicate with one another.

They use their bodies.

They use their sight and arch their backs.

Sharks live in "schools".

They use their super senses (smell, sight, and hearing) to hunt for food.

Shark Bodies

Different kinds of sharks have different bodies.

The hammerhead shark has a flat head that is shaped like a hammer.

It likes to swim in warm waters along the coast.

The saw shark has a long, toothy, snout they use to slash their prey.

It can be found in deeper waters.

The basking shark has a huge mouth that it uses to scoop its food.

This shark likes to swim close to the surface.

The greenland shark has a small head and tiny eyes. It lives in icy cold water deep in the sea so we don't know much about them.

It can live more than 400 years!

Maybe the strangest shark is the cookie cutter shark. It only the size of a man's arm, but it has huge eyes and large bottom teeth.

It lives deep in the sea but swims near the top to feed at night.

Most of us do not want to see sharks in the sea.

We like learning about these rulers of the deep from books!

Benchmark Passage
Fiction

Word Count: 519

Horse Tales

Willow Martin was reading to her horse, Brown Velvet. Her voice got louder as she read the last few pages. The book was called “*Red to the Rescue*” written by Jeremy Stone. She read, “A voice called out from the smoke filled woods. Jess was alive! And she was rescued – thanks to Red, her wonderful horse.

“*Red to the Rescue*” is the greatest book ever!” Willow told Brown Velvet.

“I have a terrific idea,” she told her horse as she jumped down from the fence.

“I’m going to write to Jeremy Stone”, Willow said.

“Who’s Jeremy Stone?” asked her brother Jack.

“He’s my favorite author,” said Willow.

“All of his books are about horses, right, Brown Velvet?”

Willow spent a lot of time writing her letter. She wanted it to be just right. She read it out loud to Brown Velvet. Her horse seemed to be listening.

Dear Mr. Stone,

I think that *Red to the Rescue* is the best book you've written!

I have a horse named Brown Velvet.

She's super smart, and she is super-fast!

Do you think you could write about Brown Velvet in your next book?

She'd make a wonderful horse hero.

Your greatest fan,

Willow Martin

Willow sealed a picture of Brown Velvet in an envelope, along with her letter.

"You shouldn't get too excited," warned Jack.

"He may get a trillion letters a week."

"Jeremy Stone will answer me," said Willow.

"I just know it.

He's a horse lover like me, of course," said Willow as she placed a horse stamp on the envelope.

"Time to go, Velvet," she told her horse.

"We have to mail this letter."

Brown Velvet shook her head up and down.

Then she galloped over to the fence.

"That's my super smart girl!" Willow said.

Willow climbed onto her horse's back, and grabbed the dangling reins.

Each and every day, Willow checked the mailbox. She found it filled with bills, magazines, and junk mail. There was no letter from Jeremy Stone.

Many weeks passed.

Still, no letter came.

“Don’t feel too sad,” said Jack.

“I imagine he’s busy,” Willow said.

“Even so, I believe he’ll write to me.”

The very next day, Willow found an envelope addressed to her in the mailbox.

She ripped it open.

Hi, Willow!

I’m in Idaho writing my new book, “Super Race Horses.”

I’m so happy that you love my stories!

Brown Velvet seems to be a very special horse.

But all of my stories are about horses that I know.

And I don’t know Brown Velvet!

Happy reading,
Jeremy Stone

P.S. This is a picture of me with my favorite horse.

Willow was disappointed that Jeremy Stone wouldn't be writing about her horse.

She watched Brown Velvet sniff at his letter.

Then Willow had an idea.

"Writing another letter?" Jack asked.

"Nope," Willow said.

"I'm writing about Brown Velvet.

Jeremy Stone doesn't know her, but I do.

Willow showed Jack what she was writing.

**Brown Velvet: A Super-Smart Horse
by Willow Martin.**

**Where was the farmer's cow?
No one could find it.**

**This was a job for Brown Velvet, the
super-smart horse!**