

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills™ 6th Edition

DIBELS®

Fifth Grade Scoring Booklet *DIBELS® Benchmark Assessment*

Edited By:

Roland H. Good III

Ruth A. Kaminski

University of Oregon

Dynamic Measurement Group, Inc.

Available:

<http://dibels.uoregon.edu/>

Instructions:

This packet includes 2 parts: the student response form and student stimulus materials. The student response forms are photocopied back to back and saddle stapled. The same form is used by each student for each benchmark assessment throughout the year. The second part is the reusable student stimulus materials. Make one copy for each person who is doing the benchmark testing. They can be laminated and comb bound for reuse.

Good, R. H., & Kaminski, R. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (6th ed.). Eugene, OR: Institute for the Development of Educational Achievement.
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DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Short Form Directions

Make sure you have reviewed the long form of the directions in the *DIBELS Administration and Scoring Guide* and have them available. Say these specific directions to the student:

Please read this (point) ***out loud. If you get stuck, I will tell you the word so you can keep reading. When I say “Stop,” I may ask you to tell me about what you read, so do your best reading. Start here*** (point to the first word of the passage). ***Begin.***

Start your stopwatch when the student says the first word of the passage.

At the end of **1 minute**, place a bracket (]) after the last word provided by the student, stop and reset the stopwatch, and say, **“Stop.”** (remove the passage)

If the student reads more than 10 words correct, proceed with the retell part. Say,

Please tell me all about what you just read. Try to tell me everything you can. Begin. Start your stopwatch after you say “Begin.”

The first time the student does not say anything for 3 seconds, say, **“Try to tell me everything you can.”** This prompt can be used only once.

If the student does not say anything or gets off track for 5 seconds, circle the total number of words in the student’s retell and say, **“Stop.”**

At the end of **1 minute**, circle the total number of words in the student’s retell and say, **“Stop.”**

Reminder

Discontinue rule—No words read correctly in the first row.

Hesitation rule—3 seconds—Tell the student the word. If necessary, indicate for student to continue with next word.

Do not give passages #2 and #3 and do not administer retell if student reads fewer than 10 words correctly.



Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills™ 6th Ed.

Name: _____ Teacher: _____

School: _____ District: _____

	Benchmark 1 Beginning/Fall	Benchmark 2 Middle/Winter	Benchmark 3 End/Spring
Date			
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency	(Median score)	(Median score)	(Median score)
Retell Fluency (Optional)	(Median score)	(Median score)	(Median score)

Fifth Grade Scoring Booklet Benchmark Assessment

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Benchmark 1.1
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Something's Missing!

Missy couldn't believe that the day she had been looking forward to had arrived at last. She and her father were leaving on a bus to visit Aunt Martha's farm. Missy looked forward to seeing her aunt, but she was especially excited about seeing her favorite cousin, Ralph.

Although the bus was crowded, Missy and her father found seats together near the front. Her father suggested that Missy sit next to the window, and she eagerly scrambled into her seat. She put her backpack on the floor in front of her and began looking out the window. Right below her, workers were busy unloading suitcases from a large pushcart and tossing them into the bus.

As soon as the bus jerked into motion, Missy reached for her backpack and got out her science book. She knew that if she didn't do her homework before they arrived at the farm, she would have less time to spend with Ralph. She got out a sheet of paper and began busily writing the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. As she worked, the hum of the motor and the gentle rocking motion of the bus made her feel very drowsy.

"I'm going to splash some water on my face," she said to her father as she put her book on the floor.

A few minutes later, Missy returned to her seat, refreshed and ready to work. However, when she reached for her science book, she discovered that it was gone. Alarmed, she began looking all around for it. The book wasn't under the seat in front

Mount Everest (Continued)

People who climb Mount Everest today use more advanced climbing equipment than early climbers. While the first climbers wore clothing made of cotton and wool, today's climbers wear high-tech fabrics designed to hold in warmth. They use oxygen tanks to breathe and satellite phones and computers to communicate with the world below. However, even though climbing today is made somewhat easier by these advances, the challenge of climbing Mount Everest is still without equal.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: _____

ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73

Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 3.3
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Mount Everest

Mount Everest, a mountain peak located in Asia, is the highest mountain in the world. It is named after George Everest, the scientist who first mapped the area. Climbers have made many attempts to reach the mountain’s peak. One of the first of these expeditions occurred about eighty years ago. However, it was not until thirty years later that two men finally conquered Mount Everest. By the end of the century, more than six hundred climbers had climbed to the top. The climb is very dangerous, though. More than one hundred people have died while attempting the climb.

Climbing to the top of Mount Everest is a dream of many explorers. One of them was once asked why the mountain holds such an attraction for so many people. He replied simply, “Because it is there.” Other climbers have other reasons for making the climb, but most would probably agree that the climb presents a tremendous challenge. To climb to the peak, climbers must battle ice, snow, and howling wind. They must cross hazardous gaps as big as canyons in the ice. Climbers sometimes lose fingers and toes to frostbite.

The lack of oxygen is one of the biggest problems that climbers face. A lack of oxygen to the brain can cause climbers to lose interest in eating and drinking and to become confused. It can also affect their sleep. Because of the harsh conditions during the climb, people who make it to the top do not stay there long. They immediately turn around and head back down the mountain.

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Something’s Missing! (Continued)

of her or in her backpack. Then Missy looked at her father, who was reading a newspaper, and noticed that the corners of his mouth were turned slightly upward.

“All right, Dad, hand it over,” she said. Smiling, her father reached under his newspaper, slowly pulled out Missy’s science book, and handed it to her with a smile.

“I just want to make sure that you have an exciting trip to the farm,” he said, laughing.

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Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell:

ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94						

Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 1.2
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

A New Habitat

10 Last month, my teacher suggested that my class choose a
 20 project to help our community in some way. My classmates
 30 suggested many different ways we could help. I suggested that
 42 we help with a beach cleanup, and my best friend suggested that
 54 we set up a recycling program at school. We finally decided to
 64 participate in a national program that helps protect wildlife. The
 73 program is called the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. Its
 83 purpose is to help people create habitats that shelter wildlife.
 96 My class decided to create a rock wall in a corner of our
 106 playground. The wall will provide shelter for animals such as
 116 frogs, toads, and chipmunks. It will even protect the spiders,
 122 bees, and beetles that live there.
 134 Building the rock pile was lots of fun. We used rocks that
 148 had been dug up at the front of the school. First, we carried the
 161 rocks to the playground and laid them out so we could see their
 171 shapes. Then we began stacking the rocks, fitting them together
 182 like a puzzle. My teacher explained that the wall should be
 195 sturdy so that it will not topple over and trap small animals. The
 206 animals can use every little opening between the rocks in the
 210 wall for their homes.
 222 We learned that all habitats must have a way for animals to
 236 get both food and water, so we planted a garden on top of the
 246 wall, using native plants. We selected plants that provide food
 258 such as fruits, seeds, and nectar. When the plants are grown, they
 269 will also provide shade for the animals. To provide water, we
 281 created shallow pools in several places in the wall, and we also
 284 added a birdbath.

Whale Song (Continued)

263 People have been recording these amazing whale songs for
 277 over thirty years. Next time you are in a music store, ask to listen
 289 to a recording of a humpback whale and you won't believe your
 302 ears! At first I thought the songs were pretty strange. The more I
 314 listened, the more I liked them. Now I almost think I understand
 319 how the whale was feeling.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: _____

ORF Total: _____

Notes:

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26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94						

Retell Total: _____

Benchmark 3.2
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Whale Song

I live with my cousin, Jackson, who is a marine biologist. His job is to study the “conversations” that the whales have with each other. Jackson says the sounds these wondrous creatures make are really like singing. If you visit our house, you will hear these songs playing on our stereo more than any other kind of music.

These haunting songs have been described as creaks, groans, moans, chirps, whistles, and squeaks. The songs are not just sounds, but are really melodies with a beginning, middle, and end. A whale will repeat the same song over and over, but slowly the song changes over time and every few years, new songs appear.

Humpback whales are found throughout the world. Males from the same area sing similar melodies. Just like you can sometimes tell where people come from by listening to them talk, Jackson can tell where a whale comes from by listening to recordings of its song. My cousin thinks the songs are a way of sharing information and creating and maintaining a social community. His research examines how baby whales learn the songs of their region.

Male humpback whales can produce songs that last for up to twenty minutes—the longest of all animals. Scuba divers who hold their breath so they won’t make any noise, and swimmers who are at least ten feet below the surface, can hear the whales. To get a really good recording of the songs, you must lower a special microphone into the sea and be pretty close.

A New Habitat (Continued)

Everyone in the school is enjoying the new addition to the playground. Teachers and students both have said that it is an interesting place to visit and that it adds to the beauty of our school. I just hope the animals like the new addition as much as everyone else seems to.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: _____ ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94		

Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 1.3
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Mount Rainier

10 Near the western coast of our country stands a stately
 18 mountain called Mount Rainier. People below the mountain
 28 often watch the mountain's ever-changing face as shadows and
 39 light pass over it. However, many are not aware that constant
 47 changes are also taking place within the mountain.
 57 Mount Rainier began to form about twelve million years ago.
 69 At that time, magma, or melted rock, from the earth's core began
 81 to build up under the earth's surface. This created a great amount
 91 of pressure. Finally, one million years ago, this pressure was
 103 released when a weak spot in the earth's crust gave way. Lava
 115 poured out of this opening and rock and ash exploded into the
 126 air. The volcanic cone that resulted grew into a huge mountain.
 136 However, the story does not end there. Today, Mount Rainier
 149 looks like a mountain that has had its top blown off. That is
 159 exactly what happened about six thousand years ago when the
 168 volcano erupted once again. Smaller eruptions have occurred in
 171 the years since.
 180 Today, some scientists consider Mount Rainier to be the
 192 most dangerous volcano in the United States. If it should erupt, a
 206 flood of hot rock, ash, and lava will gush over its top and sweep
 217 down its sides. Adding to this danger are earthquakes that occur
 230 in the area. A few years ago, an earthquake in the area caused
 240 more than two hundred injuries. Scientists worry that such events
 250 may cause huge rocks inside the volcano to shift, causing
 252 another eruption.

Help Is on the Way (Continued)

311 ospreys with safe, sturdy nesting sites out of the reach of
 312 people.
 322 Because of the hard work of concerned people, things are
 333 looking up for ospreys. Soon, watching an osprey swoop out of
 347 the sky to catch its morning meal might not be such a rare sight
 349 after all.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell:

ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94				

Notes:

Retell Total: _____

Benchmark 3.1
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Help Is on the Way

You are standing on a sandy, white beach on the Gulf of Mexico, looking out over the water. You notice a huge bird with long, narrow wings gliding over the ocean. Suddenly, the bird tucks its wings to its side and drops a hundred feet straight down into the water! Before you can blink, it shoots out of the sea with a large fish in its claws and soars upward into the sky. You have just seen an osprey catch its breakfast. Unfortunately, the sight you have just seen has become quite rare.

There are far fewer ospreys today than there once were. One reason for this decline is that people have moved into places that were once osprey nesting areas. As more and more people settled in these areas, they cut down trees to build houses, shops, and buildings. The gradual encroach of civilization has left ospreys with fewer places to build their nests. In addition, people began to use fertilizers and other chemicals that drained into the water supply. This poisoned the fish that ospreys feed on. Finally, people sometimes frightened the ospreys away from their nests, leaving their eggs to be destroyed by the hot sun.

Fortunately, help is on the way. Many areas where ospreys build their nests are now protected. One of these is the Gulf Islands National Seashore, a park that stretches for more than one hundred miles along the Gulf of Mexico. Osprey nests can be found on almost all of the islands in the park. To protect the birds, people are not allowed in many parts of the park. As a result, the number of ospreys on the islands is slowly increasing. Also, many companies and wildlife clubs have set up man-made nesting platforms in places where ospreys live. These provide

Mount Rainier (Continued)

Several towns lie in the path of a possible eruption. 262
 Fortunately for those towns, the volcano would likely send up 272
 danger signals before it erupts. These signals would appear in the 283
 form of steam rising from the mountain. This would give people 294
 in the towns below plenty of time to escape before the eruption. 306

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94		

Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 2.1
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Do You Mean Me?

12 What a thrilling week this has been! At my piano lesson on

20 Monday, my teacher, Ms. Hawkins, announced some wonderful

32 news. She explained that she has a friend named Luis who plays

43 violin in our city's symphony orchestra. She said that Luis had

54 invited all of her students to a performance on Thursday evening

65 at Central Theater. She explained that I would see a performance

74 called "The World Dances," which includes both music and

85 dance. I was so excited I ran all the way home.

95 On Thursday, I went to Central Theater with Ms. Hawkins

107 and several of her other students. Even though we were the only

118 children there, we had seats in the very front row. The

129 performance began right on time with a lively folk dance. A

137 group of dancers wearing brightly colored costumes skipped,

145 clapped, and stomped in time to the music.

156 When the folk dance was finished, Luis walked up to the

166 microphone and looked directly at our group. After he thanked

179 us for coming, he invited the student sitting in seat A3 to come

191 forward to play with the orchestra. I couldn't believe that I was

197 the student sitting in that seat!

209 As I walked to the stage, my legs trembled and my heart

224 pounded in my chest. Luis led me to a piano and invited me to sit

236 down. Then he sat down beside me and pointed to the sheet

250 music on the piano. He explained that I was to play a chord once

264 at the beginning and again at the end of the song, which was a

277 march. That's all I had to do because Luis and the dancers did

279 the rest.

Dogs Helping People (Continued)

285 When the dog's training is complete, the family that raised it

295 is invited to a Town Walk. During this "graduation ceremony,"

306 they watch the dog at work. Families often have mixed feelings

318 about these events. "Of course, we always hate to give up the

331 dog, but we also feel proud to know that it will help someone,"

333 Shin explains.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell:

ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94						

Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 2.3
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Dogs Helping People

“Raising this puppy was one of the most wonderful experiences I’ve ever had,” says Bryan Shin. He pauses to stroke the head of a black Lab at his feet. Then he continues, “Raising puppies is always fun, of course, but it’s even better when you know the puppy will become a guide dog for a person who is blind.” Bryan and his family are part of the Seeing Eye program, which selects families to take care of puppies that will be trained as guide dogs. The program usually selects families with children aged nine to nineteen.

Because raising a puppy for the program takes a lot of time, the whole family must agree to get involved. The volunteers and their puppies go to training classes, meetings, and on organized trips. The families even go to puppy camp to learn more about taking care of dogs. The families are also urged to include the dogs in family activities like trips to the mall and visits to friends. Being in a lot of different situations helps the puppies become more confident in different environments.

The families return the puppies to the Seeing Eye program when the puppies are about a year old. At this time, the dogs are ready to be trained to help a blind person get around. They learn to guide their owners as they walk on city streets or through crowded stores. The dogs are also trained to be alert for situations where special caution is needed, such as stoplights and curbs. Because guide dogs are trained to be obedient, they are allowed into places where other dogs cannot go, such as restaurants.

Do You Mean Me? (Continued)

When we finished playing, I took a bow with Luis and the dancers to the sound of loud cheering. It was wonderful to receive such support from the audience, but I was also very relieved to get back to my seat.

When I got home, I told my parents about being selected to play with the orchestra. Then I went to bed and dreamed that I was a famous concert pianist.

Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell: _____ ORF Total: _____

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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Retell Total: _____

Notes:

Benchmark 2.2
DIBELS® Oral Reading Fluency

Making a Difference

Grandma adjusted Sara's costume and stood back to examine

her. "You'll certainly be the hit of the harvest play," she said

21 enthusiastically. Sara's class was performing a harvest play for

30 the senior citizens living at Bay View Community Center. Sara

40 was especially excited because Grandma lived there.

47 Sara, who was performing as an ear of corn, wore green

58 leggings and a yellow shirt with yellow felt squares attached to

69 it. "Your role in the play is important," Grandma explained.

79 "Corn is the most important part of the harvest. It could be used

104 to feed livestock and to make bread, so it stands for the

109 importance of a good harvest."

121 Sara glanced at the clock on the wall and reviewed the lines

131 she had memorized one more time. "I'd better go downstairs,

142 Grandma. Curtain time is in just thirty minutes, and the director

152 wants us to be prepared." Hugging her grandmother, she said,

168 "Be sure to come down a little early, so you can find a seat in the

170 first row."

177 Downstairs, Sara found her classmates nervously gathering

189 on the stage. She greeted her best friend, Linda, who was dressed

203 as a farmer, and the girls took their places on the stage. When the

213 curtain rose fifteen minutes later, Sara's heart was pounding so

222 hard, she was certain the audience could hear it.

235 Before Sara knew it, she was taking a bow with the rest of

246 her class while the audience was giving a standing ovation. She

258 could see Grandma sitting with her parents in the front row. Sara

269 could tell from her expression that Grandma had found the play

276 entertaining and was very proud of her.

Making a Difference (Continued)

287 When the applause died down, Sara was surprised to see her

296 grandmother walking toward the stage. Grandma went to the

305 microphone and greeted the students. Then she said, "We've

318 planned a little surprise as a gift to thank you for performing at

330 our center. Just give us a minute to get organized." A few

339 minutes later, several men and women had gathered onstage,

350 with Grandma at the piano, and presented a concert of holiday

songs.

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Total words: _____ – errors: _____ = words correct: _____

Retell:

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
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Something's Missing!

Missy couldn't believe that the day she had been looking forward to had arrived at last. She and her father were leaving on a bus to visit Aunt Martha's farm. Missy looked forward to seeing her aunt, but she was especially excited about seeing her favorite cousin, Ralph.

Although the bus was crowded, Missy and her father found seats together near the front. Her father suggested that Missy sit next to the window, and she eagerly scrambled into her seat. She put her backpack on the floor in front of her and began looking out the window. Right below her, workers were busy unloading suitcases from a large pushcart and tossing them into the bus.

As soon as the bus jerked into motion, Missy reached for her backpack and got out her science book. She knew that if she didn't do her homework before they arrived at the farm, she would have less time to spend with Ralph. She got out a sheet of paper and began busily writing the answers to the questions at the end of the chapter. As she worked, the hum of the motor and the gentle rocking motion of the bus made her feel very drowsy. "I'm going to splash some water on my face," she said to her father as she put her book on the floor.

A few minutes later, Missy returned to her seat, refreshed and ready to work. However, when she reached for her science book, she discovered that it was gone. Alarmed, she began looking all around for it. The book wasn't under the seat in front

of her or in her backpack. Then Missy looked at her father, who was reading a newspaper, and noticed that the corners of his mouth were turned slightly upward.

“All right, Dad, hand it over,” she said. Smiling, her father reached under his newspaper, slowly pulled out Missy’s science book, and handed it to her with a smile.

“I just want to make sure that you have an exciting trip to the farm,” he said, laughing.

A New Habitat

Last month, my teacher suggested that my class choose a project to help our community in some way. My classmates suggested many different ways we could help. I suggested that we help with a beach cleanup, and my best friend suggested that we set up a recycling program at school. We finally decided to participate in a national program that helps protect wildlife. The program is called the Backyard Wildlife Habitat Program. Its purpose is to help people create habitats that shelter wildlife.

My class decided to create a rock wall in a corner of our playground. The wall will provide shelter for animals such as frogs, toads, and chipmunks. It will even protect the spiders, bees, and beetles that live there.

Building the rock pile was lots of fun. We used rocks that had been dug up at the front of the school. First, we carried the rocks to the playground and laid them out so we could see their shapes. Then we began stacking the rocks, fitting them together like a puzzle. My teacher explained that the wall should be sturdy so that it will not topple over and trap small animals. The animals can use every little opening between the rocks in the wall for their homes.

We learned that all habitats must have a way for animals to get both food and water, so we planted a garden on top of the wall, using native plants. We selected plants that provide food such as fruits, seeds, and nectar. When the plants are grown, they will also provide shade for the animals. To provide water, we created shallow pools in several places in the wall, and we also added a birdbath.

Everyone in the school is enjoying the new addition to the playground. Teachers and students both have said that it is an interesting place to visit and that it adds to the beauty of our school. I just hope the animals like the new addition as much as everyone else seems to.

Mount Rainier

Near the western coast of our country stands a stately mountain called Mount Rainier. People below the mountain often watch the mountain's ever-changing face as shadows and light pass over it. However, many are not aware that constant changes are also taking place within the mountain.

Mount Rainier began to form about twelve million years ago. At that time, magma, or melted rock, from the earth's core began to build up under the earth's surface. This created a great amount of pressure. Finally, one million years ago, this pressure was released when a weak spot in the earth's crust gave way. Lava poured out of this opening and rock and ash exploded into the air. The volcanic cone that resulted grew into a huge mountain. However, the story does not end there. Today, Mount Rainier looks like a mountain that has had its top blown off. That is exactly what happened about six thousand years ago when the volcano erupted once again. Smaller eruptions have occurred in the years since.

Today, some scientists consider Mount Rainier to be the most dangerous volcano in the United States. If it should erupt, a flood of hot rock, ash, and lava will gush over its top and sweep down its sides. Adding to this danger are earthquakes that occur in the area. A few years ago, an earthquake in the area caused more than two hundred injuries. Scientists worry that such events may cause huge rocks inside the volcano to shift, causing another eruption.

Several towns lie in the path of a possible eruption. Fortunately for those towns, the volcano would likely send up danger signals before it erupts. These signals would appear in the form of steam rising from the mountain. This would give people in the towns below plenty of time to escape before the eruption.

Do You Mean Me?

What a thrilling week this has been! At my piano lesson on Monday, my teacher, Ms. Hawkins, announced some wonderful news. She explained that she has a friend named Luis who plays violin in our city's symphony orchestra. She said that Luis had invited all of her students to a performance on Thursday evening at Central Theater. She explained that I would see a performance called "The World Dances," which includes both music and dance. I was so excited I ran all the way home.

On Thursday, I went to Central Theater with Ms. Hawkins and several of her other students. Even though we were the only children there, we had seats in the very front row. The performance began right on time with a lively folk dance. A group of dancers wearing brightly colored costumes skipped, clapped, and stomped in time to the music.

When the folk dance was finished, Luis walked up to the microphone and looked directly at our group. After he thanked us for coming, he invited the student sitting in seat A3 to come forward to play with the orchestra. I couldn't believe that I was the student sitting in that seat!

As I walked to the stage, my legs trembled and my heart pounded in my chest. Luis led me to a piano and invited me to sit down. Then he sat down beside me and pointed to the sheet music on the piano. He explained that I was to play a chord once at the beginning and again at the end of the song, which was a march. That's all I had to do because Luis and the dancers did the rest.

When we finished playing, I took a bow with Luis and the dancers to the sound of loud cheering. It was wonderful to receive such support from the audience, but I was also very relieved to get back to my seat.

When I got home, I told my parents about being selected to play with the orchestra. Then I went to bed and dreamed that I was a famous concert pianist.

Making a Difference

Grandma adjusted Sara's costume and stood back to examine her. "You'll certainly be the hit of the harvest play," she said enthusiastically. Sara's class was performing a harvest play for the senior citizens living at Bay View Community Center. Sara was especially excited because Grandma lived there.

Sara, who was performing as an ear of corn, wore green leggings and a yellow shirt with yellow felt squares attached to it. "Your role in the play is important." Grandma explained. "Corn is the most important part of the harvest. It could be used to feed livestock and to make bread, so it stands for the importance of a good harvest."

Sara glanced at the clock on the wall and reviewed the lines she had memorized one more time. "I'd better go downstairs, Grandma. Curtain time is in just thirty minutes, and the director wants us to be prepared." Hugging her grandmother, she said, "Be sure to come down a little early, so you can find a seat in the first row."

Downstairs, Sara found her classmates nervously gathering on the stage. She greeted her best friend, Linda, who was dressed as a farmer, and the girls took their places on the stage. When the curtain rose fifteen minutes later, Sara's heart was pounding so hard, she was certain the audience could hear it.

Before Sara knew it, she was taking a bow with the rest of her class while the audience was giving a standing ovation. She could see Grandma sitting with her parents in the front row. Sara could tell from her expression that Grandma had found the play entertaining and was very proud of her.

When the applause died down, Sara was surprised to see her grandmother walking toward the stage. Grandma went to the microphone and greeted the students. Then she said, “We’ve planned a little surprise as a gift to thank you for performing at our center. Just give us a minute to get organized.” A few minutes later, several men and women had gathered onstage, with Grandma at the piano, and presented a concert of holiday songs.

Dogs Helping People

“Raising this puppy was one of the most wonderful experiences I’ve ever had,” says Bryan Shin. He pauses to stroke the head of a black Lab at his feet. Then he continues, “Raising puppies is always fun, of course, but it’s even better when you know the puppy will become a guide dog for a person who is blind.” Bryan and his family are part of the Seeing Eye program, which selects families to take care of puppies that will be trained as guide dogs. The program usually selects families with children aged nine to nineteen.

Because raising a puppy for the program takes a lot of time, the whole family must agree to get involved. The volunteers and their puppies go to training classes, meetings, and on organized trips. The families even go to puppy camp to learn more about taking care of dogs. The families are also urged to include the dogs in family activities like trips to the mall and visits to friends. Being in a lot of different situations helps the puppies become more confident in different environments.

The families return the puppies to the Seeing Eye program when the puppies are about a year old. At this time, the dogs are ready to be trained to help a blind person get around. They learn to guide their owners as they walk on city streets or through crowded stores. The dogs are also trained to be alert for situations where special caution is needed, such as stoplights and curbs. Because guide dogs are trained to be obedient, they are allowed into places where other dogs cannot go, such as restaurants.

When the dog's training is complete, the family that raised it is invited to a Town Walk. During this "graduation ceremony," they watch the dog at work. Families often have mixed feelings about these events. "Of course, we always hate to give up the dog, but we also feel proud to know that it will help someone," Shin explains.

Help Is on the Way

You are standing on a sandy, white beach on the Gulf of Mexico, looking out over the water. You notice a huge bird with long, narrow wings gliding over the ocean. Suddenly, the bird tucks its wings to its side and drops a hundred feet straight down into the water! Before you can blink, it shoots out of the sea with a large fish in its claws and soars upward into the sky. You have just seen an osprey catch its breakfast. Unfortunately, the sight you have just seen has become quite rare.

There are far fewer ospreys today than there once were. One reason for this decline is that people have moved into places that were once osprey nesting areas. As more and more people settled in these areas, they cut down trees to build houses, shops, and buildings. The gradual encroachment of civilization has left ospreys with fewer places to build their nests. In addition, people began to use fertilizers and other chemicals that drained into the water supply. This poisoned the fish that ospreys feed on. Finally, people sometimes frightened the ospreys away from their nests, leaving their eggs to be destroyed by the hot sun.

Fortunately, help is on the way. Many areas where ospreys build their nests are now protected. One of these is the Gulf Islands National Seashore, a park that stretches for more than one hundred miles along the Gulf of Mexico. Osprey nests can be found on almost all of the islands in the park. To protect the birds, people are not allowed in many parts of the park. As a result, the number of ospreys on the islands is slowly increasing. Also, many companies and wildlife clubs have set up man-made nesting platforms in places where ospreys live. These provide

ospreys with safe, sturdy nesting sites out of the reach of people.

Because of the hard work of concerned people, things are looking up for ospreys. Soon, watching an osprey swoop out of the sky to catch its morning meal might not be such a rare sight after all.

Whale Song

I live with my cousin, Jackson, who is a marine biologist. His job is to study the “conversations” that the whales have with each other. Jackson says the sounds these wondrous creatures make are really like singing. If you visit our house, you will hear these songs playing on our stereo more than any other kind of music.

These haunting songs have been described as creaks, groans, moans, chirps, whistles, and squeaks. The songs are not just sounds, but are really melodies with a beginning, middle, and end. A whale will repeat the same song over and over, but slowly the song changes over time and every few years, new songs appear.

Humpback whales are found throughout the world. Males from the same area sing similar melodies. Just like you can sometimes tell where people come from by listening to them talk, Jackson can tell where a whale comes from by listening to recordings of its song. My cousin thinks the songs are a way of sharing information and creating and maintaining a social community. His research examines how baby whales learn the songs of their region.

Male humpback whales can produce songs that last for up to twenty minutes—the longest of all animals. Scuba divers who hold their breath so they won’t make any noise, and swimmers who are at least ten feet below the surface, can hear the whales. To get a really good recording of the songs, you must lower a special microphone into the sea and be pretty close.

People have been recording these amazing whale songs for over thirty years. Next time you are in a music store, ask to listen to a recording of a humpback whale and you won't believe your ears! At first I thought the songs were pretty strange. The more I listened, the more I liked them. Now I almost think I understand how the whale was feeling.

Mount Everest

Mount Everest, a mountain peak located in Asia, is the highest mountain in the world. It is named after George Everest, the scientist who first mapped the area. Climbers have made many attempts to reach the mountain's peak. One of the first of these expeditions occurred about eighty years ago. However, it was not until thirty years later that two men finally conquered Mount Everest. By the end of the century, more than six hundred climbers had climbed to the top. The climb is very dangerous, though. More than one hundred people have died while attempting the climb.

Climbing to the top of Mount Everest is a dream of many explorers. One of them was once asked why the mountain holds such an attraction for so many people. He replied simply, "Because it is there." Other climbers have other reasons for making the climb, but most would probably agree that the climb presents a tremendous challenge. To climb to the peak, climbers must battle ice, snow, and howling wind. They must cross hazardous gaps as big as canyons in the ice. Climbers sometimes lose fingers and toes to frostbite.

The lack of oxygen is one of the biggest problems that climbers face. A lack of oxygen to the brain can cause climbers to lose interest in eating and drinking and to become confused. It can also affect their sleep. Because of the harsh conditions during the climb, people who make it to the top do not stay there long. They immediately turn around and head back down the mountain.

People who climb Mount Everest today use more advanced climbing equipment than early climbers. While the first climbers wore clothing made of cotton and wool, today's climbers wear high-tech fabrics designed to hold in warmth. They use oxygen tanks to breathe and satellite phones and computers to communicate with the world below. However, even though climbing today is made somewhat easier by these advances, the challenge of climbing Mount Everest is still without equal.