

Name: _____



Classroom Cereal

Date: _____

Story 7

Part 1 of 5

“The Skills Test”

Part 1 of 5: A Forbidden Message

The Skills Test was back. Each March, the students of Fairview Middle School took a test that supposedly measured their skills. The test in total silence was taken and throughout many long sessions over several days. This year, the Skills Test, or TST would be taken online.

Malina gazed through the paragraph on her screen (which asked her to calculate the number of blades of grass in her neighborhood) when a strange message popped up.

I'm organizing a rebellion. I need you're help.

Malina looked around. No one else seemed to have just received a mysterious instant message. Another appeared.

At the stroke of noon tomorrow, we shall walk out of this test. We shall inspire the others and they shall join us.

Malina saw a blinking line below the message and realized she could respond. She spun around cautiously, looking for the teacher in charge. TST was strictly controlled and this type of messaging, however it was happening, was forbidden. As soon as Malina started typing, a third message arrived.

Mark Twain, the great American humorist, said, “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” This test is irrelevant and we must rebel.

“Time’s up!” the teacher announced. Everyone closed their computers, and Malina was left wondering. Who is this rebel messenger? And how many middle schoolers can quote Mark Twain from memory?

Directions

1. Read the story
2. Find the five errors
3. Mark the errors using the key

Key

- Spelling error
- Add punctuation
- Capitalize letter
- Remove word
- Wrong word
- Move word
- Make letter lower case

Checklist

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Question

How has the Mark Twain quote inspired the mysterious rebel messenger?

Name: _____



Classroom Cereal

Date: _____

Story 7

Part 2 of 5

“The Skills Test”

Part 2 of 5: A Familiar Scribble

After school, Malina snuck into the library. Almost all of the big fluorescent lights were switched off, leaving the library dark and mysterious. The library was off limits to students after school, and Malina knew she had only a few minutes before the custodian arrived to vacuum. She was searching for one name. Mark Twain.

As she scanned a shelf Malina thought back to the strange messages she'd received during that afternoon's TST session. Who was the messenger? Why was she chosen to help lead the protest? And was Mark Twain really *that* motivational? Suddenly, a bulky blue book spine caught her eye. *The Times and Teachings of Mark Twain*.

The book's spine didn't crack like it were stiff. The pages flopped to the side as if they were used to being turned. By the light of her phone, Malina flipped page after page. She froze when she came to one marked by a alien green ink. The messenger's education quote was circled, and below it, in the same green marker, was scribbled TST rebellion. The letters reminded her of graffiti. Malina swore she recognized the handwriting.

TST rebellion

One a the library's double doors flew open and Malina turned to see the custodian. Malina ran through the library's back exit and into the hallway, the Twain book tucked beneath her arm.

Directions

1. Read the story
2. Find the five errors
3. Mark the errors using the key

Key

-  - Spelling error
-  - Add punctuation
-  - Capitalize letter
-  - Remove word
-  - Wrong word
-  - Move word
-  - Make letter lower case

Checklist

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Question

What clues tell you the messenger recently read *The Times and Teachings of Mark Twain*?

Name: _____



Classroom Cereal

Date: _____

Story 7

Part 3 of 5

“The Skills Test”

Part 3 of 5: The Stroke of Noon

Malina spent most of the morning TST session about Mark Twain thinking. She thought ahead to later, when the messenger would remind her of the rebellion scheduled for noon and she would reveal her discovery.

The reminder arrived at 11:55.

The hour of rebellion is near. Join me.

Malina swiveled slowly in her seat, looking for the teacher. Then she respond.

I found your library book. I've seen you're handwriting before. Who are you?

The messenger responded immediately.

My identity is of little importance. I merely the catalyst of a movement that shall open the eyes of this school to the pointlessness of tests like TST. Join me.

It was 11:57.

I'm not walking out. I don't even know who you are. Your going to get in serious trouble.

The seconds felt like hours. Malina looked around at the other students, searching for someone preparing to get up. It was 11:59. Finally, another message popped up.

The rebellion is rescheduled for tomorrow. We shall walk out of the test at 10 a.m. and gather at the Backstop.

The Backstop! That was it. Malina knew how she recognized the messenger's handwriting.

Directions

1. Read the story
2. Find the five errors
3. Mark the errors using the key

Key

- Spelling error
- Add punctuation
- Capitalize letter
- Remove word
- Wrong word
- Move word
- Make letter lower case

Checklist

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Questions

What is the **mood** of this part of the story?

Why do you say so?

Name: _____



Classroom Cereal

Date: _____

Story 7

Part 4 of 5

“The Skills Test”

Part 4 of 5: At the Backstop

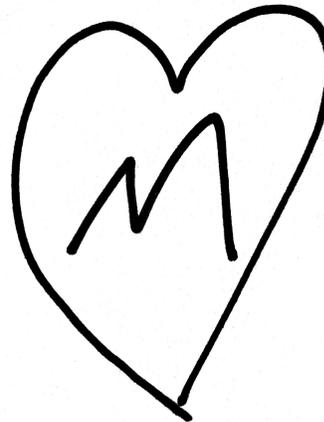
Directions

1. Read the story
2. Find the five errors
3. Mark the errors using the key

Behind Fairview Middle School were several open fields. The main one was a soccer field, used by PE classes and Fairview High School’s soccer teams. Another was a old softball field. Fairview Middle hadn’t had a softball team in years, but the field, or part of it, still got some use. Behind home plate was a big, chain-link backstop. along with the wooden dugout benches and a few nearby trees, the area was known throughout the school as the Backstop. In warm months, it was a popular after-school hangout. The trees and wooden benches were tattooed with carvings, scribbles, and other graffiti.

After school, Malina trudged across the still-frozen field toward the Backstop, the Twain book under her arm tucked. Halfway across the field, she lifted her chin from the warmth of her coat to see a hooded figure standing at one of the trees. The figure saw her approaching and took off running in the opposite direction. Malina accelerated into a jog. “Hey!” she called. “Are you Mark Twain?!?” She confused her words in her excitement. Was it the messenger.

When Malina arrived, three things remained of the mysterious hooded figure. The first: slightly undersized footprints in the thin snow. The second: a green Marker, its cap off and its ink wet. The third: on the tree and in green marker, a newly drawn, graffiti-like letter M written inside of a heart.



Key

-  - Spelling error
-  - Add punctuation
-  - Capitalize letter
-  - Remove word
-  - Wrong word
-  - Move word
-  - Make letter lower case

Checklist

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Questions

Who do you think is the mysterious figure?

Why do you say so?

Name: _____



Classroom Cereal

Date: _____

Story 7

Part 5 of 5

“The Skills Test”

Part 5 of 5: The Mysterious Messenger

Directions

1. Read the story
2. Find the five errors
3. Mark the errors using the key

That night, Malina reviewed the evidence. The mysterious messenger was a passionate fan of Mark Twain and critic of TST. He (or she) had a formal way of speaking, slightly undersized feet, a trusty green marker, and a love for someone whose name began with the letter M.

By the next morning’s TST session, Malina was still at a loss. At 9:55, a message appeared.

Five minutes. Join me.

Someone barged through the classroom door. It was Superintendent Chase, followed closely by Principal Mellon.

“Where is Orn Johanson?” the superintendent demanded.

In the back of the classroom, an small boy stood up. It was Orn, the boy from Iceland who had gave a speech a few months earlier. “*Johánnsson!*” Orn corrected her.

Ten minutes later, Malina, Orn, Principal Mellon, Superintendent Chase, Rodgers, and Megan Zimmerman (Orn’s girlfriend) sat in Principal Mellon’s office. Orn sat peacefully, holding Megan’s hand and at Superintendent Chase smiling menacingly. With Rodgers translating, Orn calmly explained how he had illegally hacked into a messaging service (that translated Icelandic into English) and tried to organize his rebellion. He said he chose Malina to help lead the protest because of her “high reputation among the student body.”

As Orn recounted his plot, Superintendent Chase glared at Principal Mellon.

“This is very serious indeed, Dan,” she said.

Key

-  - Spelling error
-  - Add punctuation
-  - Capitalize letter
-  - Remove word
-  - Wrong word
-  - Move word
-  - Make letter lower case

Checklist

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Questions

Are you surprised Orn is the messenger? (Think back to Story 3.)

How is Superintendent Chase feeling toward Principal Mellon? Why?