Name: _____

Nonfiction Reading Test
The Pony Express

Directions: Read the following passage and answer the questions that follow. Refer to the text to check your answers when appropriate.

In this age of texts and tweets, it is easy to send messages. You just press a few buttons, and boom! Your message is sent. The person to whom you sent it will get it in just a few seconds. Distance is no longer an issue. But things weren't always so easy.

In 1848 gold was found in California. Thousands of people rushed there to get some. Many people liked living there and decided to stay. But there wasn't a whole lot between California and Missouri, where the nearest trains ran. The train line to California wasn't finished until 1869. It took a long time to ride a horse to Missouri.

Imagine that it is the year 1860. You have moved to California to open a shop. Most of your family stayed back East. Your shop is doing well and now you want to your family to join you. How do you get news to them? There's no phone, no train, and you can't leave your shop for too long. What do you do? Well, you could use the Pony Express.

In 1860 and 1861, the Pony Express was the fastest way to get news to and from the West. The trail that they rode was around 2000 miles long. It took most people weeks or months to ride that far. The Pony Express could make the trip in just ten days. Those speeds were unheard of at the time. So how did they do it? Well, they had a good system.



The Pony Express had 184 stations along the trail. The stations were around ten miles apart. This is about how far a horse could run at a gallop before tiring. The rider would switch to a new horse at each station. He would only take his mail pouch with him. Every 75-100 miles, the rider would get to a home station. At each home station, riders would rest. Before resting, he would give his mail pouch to a new rider. The mail never stopped moving, even while the horses and riders rested.

It was tough to ride for the Pony Express. Each rider had to weigh less than 125 pounds. Speed was the key. Most of the riders were teenage boys. They rode at a fast pace for up to 100 miles a day. If there were an emergency, one might have to ride 200 miles in a day. The ride could be rough and dangerous. Attacks by Native Americans were common. But in its time running, the Pony Express only lost one mail pouch.

The Pony Express filled an important role for a time, but it did not last. The Civil War started in April of 1861. This was bad news for the owners. The worst for them was yet to come. On October 24th, 1861, the first telegraph line to California was finished. This linked them to the rest of the country. People could send messages in an instant. Two days later the Pony Express closed. But the lore of the brave riders lives on even today.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. Which happened first?
a. Settlers rushed to California to find gold.
b. The Pony Express was started.
c. The train line to California was finished.
d. The first telegraph line to California was finished.

2. Which best explains why Pony Express riders had to weigh less than 125 pounds?
a. Heavier men were more expensive.
b. Horses were scared of heavier men.
c. Heavier men scared customers.
d. Horses could move quicker with lighter men.

3. How fast could the Pony Express take a letter from California to Missouri?
a. 24 hours
b. ten days
c. twenty days
d. one month

4. Why were the Pony Express stations about ten miles apart?
a. This was about as far as a man could walk in a single day.
b. This was as far as a man could ride on a horse in a day.
c. This was so the riders wouldn't get so lonely at night.
d. This was as far as a horse could run without getting tired.

5. Which was probably **not** a requirement to be a rider for the Pony Express?
a. You had to be light.
b. You had to be an expert horse rider.
c. You had to be able to read and write.
d. You had to be brave in the face of danger.

6. Which best describes that main idea of the fifth paragraph?
a. It is about how many Pony Express stations there were.
b. It is about how the Pony Express carried mail so quickly.
c. It is about how the Pony Express riders slept in the stations.
d. It is about how far the Pony Express riders would go in a day.

7. Which of these ended the Pony Express?
a. The telegraph
b. The Civil War
c. Wars with Native Americans
d. The train line

8. About how far did Pony Express riders travel on a usual day?
a. 10 miles
b. 200 miles
c. 100 miles
d. 2000 miles

9. How many mail pouches did the Pony Express lose?
a. The Pony Express never lost a mail pouch.
b. One
c. Two
d. Too many to keep track

10. Which title best describes the author's purpose in writing this?
a. *Out of Touch: Why Phones are Faster Than Horses*
b. *The Pony Express: Stories of Their Bravery in Battle*
c. *Back in Touch: Why We Should Use Horses to Deliver the Mail*
d. *The Pony Express: About the 1860's Fastest Mail Service*

LIVEWORKSHEETS