Name_____

Harry S. Truman, U.S. President

When people think of a United States president, they typically think of someone who is highly educated and from a family of successful people. Harry Truman, the 33rd president, lived a humble life until thrust into the United States Senate at age 50 without a formal college education. He became vice president in 1945 and then president that same year after President Franklin Roosevelt died in office. He was the last president not to have a college degree.

Truman was born into a farming family in Missouri. As a child, he loved the piano, becoming proficient and playing regularly the rest of his life. After graduating high school, he started working and had a succession of jobs that included being a railroad timekeeper and a mailroom clerk for a newspaper. After his military service, he started a business, which ultimately failed.

In 1917, Truman joined the army to serve in World War I. He was captain of an artillery unit and showed exceptional leadership and courage. One time during battle, the Germans attacked, and his men began to turn and flee. He was able to rally them to turn and fight. After that, he had undivided loyalty from his men.

He showed that same determination as president. Taking over during World War II, he immediately faced immense difficulties. Through courage and homespun wisdom, he was able to help guide the war to a successful end. His decision to use atomic weapons against Japan was perhaps the single most difficult decision a president has ever had to make. He led the world in the post-war era providing food, clothing, and hope to much of Europe.

Harry Truman serves as a reminder that difficulties in life can be overcome and that one can achieve great things in spite of setbacks and trials.

Text Questions

1. What is one fact from Truman's life that sets him apart from other presidents in recent history?
   a. He had a job before becoming president.
   b. He served in the U.S. Senate.
   c. He did not have a college degree.
   d. He served in the military.
2. What is one example of Truman's leadership abilities?
   a. He inspired his men to turn and fight while under German attack.
   b. He played the piano well.
   c. He was not accepted into West Point.
   d. He had a successful business after the war.
3. Which statement from the text best explains Truman's success as president?
   a. He became vice president in 1945.
   b. He became president that same year after President Franklin Roosevelt died in office.
   c. Taking over during World War II, he immediately faced immense difficulties.
   d. Through courage and homespun wisdom, he was able to help guide the war to a successful end.
4. Which is a synonym for the word *exceptional* as it is used in the third paragraph?
   a. uncommon
   b. unbelievable
   c. rare
   d. outstanding
5. What do you think made Truman's decision to use atomic weapons so difficult?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

Man of Finance

Many Americans seek success, but very few make it into the history books. Even fewer become known and remembered for their positive contributions to the development of their country. John Pierpont ("J.P.") Morgan was considered a master of finance and is still considered one of America's leading businessmen.

Morgan got a glimpse into his future early in life, as he learned the language of banking and studied at a leading private financial house in New York. The son of a banker, he followed his father into the family business. He went on to become a well-known financier. In 1871, he founded a private banking company, which later became known as J.P. Morgan & Company. Over time, Morgan learned to make wise financial decisions, including investing in the emerging electricity industry. During times of depression and financial crisis, the government requested help from Morgan's company.

During the period in which Morgan lived, people scrutinized the few who had wealth and power. They accused J.P. Morgan of creating monopolies, which made it difficult for other businesses to compete in the market. It's true that he invested heavily in the railroad industry, as well as founding the U.S. National Steel Corporation.

Finance didn't consume Morgan's entire life, however. An avid sailor, he was a member of a yacht club and a participant in America's Cup races. As one of the founders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Morgan also enjoyed collecting art, eventually donating his collection to the museum. He also played a role in organizing the Museum of Natural History. Morgan made private donations as well, in one instance donating money toward the construction of a new hospital building.

At the time of his death in 1913, Morgan was considered an influential financier. His influence continues even today, not only in the finance company that bears his name, but also in the concept of corporate power and wealth.

Text Questions

1. Which of the following is not an industry in which J.P. Morgan invested?
   a. electricity
   b. railroads
   c. steel
   d. plastic
2. Which statement from the text gives a clue about a major influence in Morgan's career?
   a. The son of a banker, he followed his father into the family business.
   b. During times of depression and financial crisis, the government requested help from Morgan's company.
   c. During the period in which Morgan lived, people scrutinized the few who had wealth and power.
   d. He invested heavily in the railroad industry, as well as founding the U.S. National Steel Corporation.
3. What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?
   a. It describes Morgan's early life.
   b. It explains Morgan's role in the development of corporate business in America.
   c. It describes Morgan's interests outside of finance.
   d. It explains what made J.P. Morgan so successful.
4. Which is a synonym for the word *crisis* as it is used in the second paragraph?
   a. dilemma
   b. emergency
   c. plight
   d. decision
5. Based on what you read, what might be considered J.P. Morgan's greatest contribution to our economy?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

Stronger Than Steel

Many inventions are renowned for their role in improving quality of life or for helping people. Stephanie Kwolek contributed to both with her invention of Kevlar®. At first, Kwolek wanted to study medicine. After earning a degree in chemistry, she took a temporary research position. Kwolek became so intrigued, she decided to pursue a career in the area of chemical research.

Her work and discoveries with polymers led to the creation of a material five times stronger than steel. The material was named Kevlar. It came about through a combination of experimenting with polymers, heat, and spinning various substances. When tested, the new polymer proved to be very lightweight, yet extremely strong. Resistant to fire and other types of corrosion, it is the primary component of bulletproof vests. As such, it helps save the lives of countless soldiers and law enforcement officers. Many people don't realize, however, that Kevlar is also used in other products. Safety helmets, skis, and hunting and camping gear all make use of Kevlar. Not surprisingly, it is also used in suspension bridge cables, and in sea and space technology as well.

Kwolek has received numerous awards for her work and patents. Today, she is retired and enjoys her hobbies, as well as speaking with students about her invention. Kwolek likes to tell her audiences, "Every person has value, no matter what you do. This is what you have to remember."

Text Questions

1. What does the word *corrosion* mean as it is used in the second paragraph?
   a. extreme heat sources
   b. wearing away due to chemical reactions
   c. a substance formed from a long chain of simple molecules
   d. multiple liquids stirred together
2. Which was <u>not</u> one of Kwolek's goals in life?
   a. to study medicine
   b. to work in chemical research
   c. to help people and improve their quality of life
   d. to build suspension bridges
3. Why might Kevlar be a good material for safety helmets?
   a. It is bulletproof and fire resistant.
   b. It has a smooth, shiny finish.
   c. It is inexpensive to manufacture.
   d. It can withstand heat.
4. Which of the following was a key factor in the invention of Kevlar?
   a. Some important people walked into the lab on the right day.
   b. It passed military tests.
   c. It resulted from a combination of experimenting with polymers, heat, and spinning various substances.
   d. Kwolek was a research intern at a chemical company.
5. What might a student find significant about Kwolek's quote, "Every person has value, no matter what you do"?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

Just an Ordinary Guy

Louis Sachar, the author of *Holes*, is just an ordinary person. He spent part of his childhood in New York, but his family moved to California while he was still in elementary school. While living in New York, his father worked on the 78th floor of the Empire State Building. Sachar says this may have been the inspiration for the Wayside School.

Sachar studied economics in college. He received a flier on campus one day that offered college credit in exchange for helping out as a teacher's aide at a local elementary school. Sachar thought it sounded like a good way to obtain free credit, so he signed up. It quickly became his favorite college class. He helped in classrooms and on the playground as a lunch supervisor. Sachar says that the kids in his books are based on kids he knew while working at that school.

After college, Sachar got a job at a warehouse. During this time he wrote his first book, *Sideways Stories from Wayside School*. It took him almost a year to write the book, which was accepted by a publisher during his first week at law school. He passed the bar exam and then did part-time legal work. He went on to practice law, continuing to write children's books in the evenings. Nearly ten years later, Sachar was making enough money from the sales of his books to leave the law profession and devote himself to writing full-time.

One of Sachar's most well-known works, *Holes*, won a Newbery Award in 1999. Sachar says when he started writing the book, it was more about the place than the characters. As he wrote, the characters became more developed. It took him a year and a half to write the book, the same length of time Stanley was sentenced to Camp Green Lake.

Text Questions

1. Where did Louis Sachar receive the inspiration for his stories?
   a. from the books he read
   b. from things that happened in his life
   c. from his job
   d. from his teachers
2. Based on the text, what can you infer about the author of *Holes*?
   a. He doesn't have a strong understanding of childhood behavior.
   b. He had an unhappy childhood.
   c. He finds inspiration for his books from real-life events.
   d. He enjoys writing books about law schools.
3. Which statement is <u>not</u> true?
   a. There is a real Wayside school building that is sideways.
   b. Sachar helped in classrooms and on the playground as a lunch supervisor.
   c. It took Sachar a year and a half to write *Holes*.
   d. One of Sachar's most well-known works, *Holes*, won a Newbery Award in 1999.
4. What does the word *inspiration* mean as it is used in the first paragraph?
   a. breathing
   b. something supernatural
   c. an action that prompts a reaction
   d. something that influences someone to do something creative
5. After reading this passage, what can you learn from Sachar about success?

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

Woman of Justice

In an arena historically dominated by males, Sandra Day O'Connor had the honor of being the first woman nominated to serve on the Supreme Court. President Reagan nominated her in 1981, and she served until her retirement in 2006.

Justice O'Connor held a variety of positions as she gained legal and political experience. Early in her career, she served as Deputy Attorney General. O'Connor served as a civilian attorney in Germany and later as Assistant Attorney General for the state of Arizona. She served three terms as an Arizona state senator. From there, she continued to move up within the court system, serving as judge of a county Superior Court and then, a few years later, she was appointed to the Arizona Court of Appeals. Throughout her career, O'Connor remained active in civic and cultural organizations.

During her career, O'Connor earned a reputation as a moderate conservative. She often played an important role in key decisions affecting the justice system. She believes that justices are limited to the duties of the judicial branch, without their authority extending to executive or legislative roles. That is, justices do not create laws, nor do they implement or enforce laws. The role of the judicial branch is to interpret the law and apply it to cases of dispute. Although the Supreme Court spends much time determining whether or not laws are in fact constitutional, that power and authority is not granted in the Constitution. Many of the duties set forth in the Constitution refer to cases and rights between states or between the federal government and other parties.

In retirement, O'Connor has expressed her opinion that judges should not be elected. Rather, they should be appointed based on merit. She believes this would lead to better-qualified judges. O'Connor developed an interactive website program to teach middle-school students about the court system. Sandra Day O'Connor continues to make a positive impact in the lives of Americans.

Text Questions

1. Which is a synonym for the word *moderate* as it is used in the third paragraph?
   a. tolerant
   b. inexpensive
   c. radical
   d. average
2. Which position provided Sandra Day O'Connor with political experience?
   a. Deputy Attorney General
   b. civilian attorney
   c. Arizona State Senator
   d. Arizona Court of Appeals
3. Throughout her career, how did Justice O'Connor approach legal decisions?
   a. as a conservative
   b. as a moderate conservative
   c. as a moderate liberal
   d. as a liberal
4. Based on this passage, why might Sandra Day O'Connor have been nominated to the position of Supreme Court Justice?
   a. She knew the president.
   b. She had experience as a civilian attorney overseas.
   c. She was active in civic and cultural organizations.
   d. She had a wide range of experience, both political and legal, and had risen up within the court system.
5. Based on what you read and any background knowledge you have, do you agree or disagree with O'Connor's opinion regarding the role of a Supreme Court Justice? Give reasons to support your answer.

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