

Name _____ Date _____

What Is Science Anyway?

"So what is science, anyway?" Kate asked her friend, Nia, as they walked to school one morning.

"What kind of question is that?" Nia replied. "You've been learning about science in school forever, and you don't know what it is?"

Kate nodded.

"Sure, we've studied science, but the other day, my little sister looked at my workbook and said 'What is science?' and I got all tongue-tied," Kate explained. "I couldn't explain it to her. And besides, I'm not really sure why I need to learn about all that stuff if I'm not going to be a scientist. You *know* I'm going to be a video game designer when I grow up."

"So how would *you* explain science to my little sister?" she asked Nia. Nia thought for a minute.

"Well, it's when you try to find something out about something . . ." Nia started. "You know, when you study how things work and why they are the way they are."

Her friend gave her a doubtful look.

"That doesn't sound like a very scientific definition to me," Kate said.

"You're right," Nia said. "It is hard to explain. But if you want to create video games, I bet you'll need to study science."

Later that day, as their teacher, Mrs. Jones, told everyone to get out their science notebooks, Nia raised her hand.

"Mrs. Jones, Kate and I were talking earlier about science. Her little sister asked what it was, and we think it's hard to explain. We're also not sure why we need to know about it if we're not planning to be scientists."

Kate looked at Nia. Why would she tell the teacher about their talk? Mrs. Jones might get mad that they were asking if science really mattered to them!

But Mrs. Jones looked excited.

"Well, girls, you know you're not the first ones to notice that science is hard to explain," she said, smiling. "Later this week, I'll make some time for us to look up some definitions of science and even write our own."

"Today," she continued, "I'll just tell you one of my favorite quotes about science that is very short and simple. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a famous poet and writer from a long time ago, said this: 'Men love to wonder, and that is the seed of science.' "

She gave the students a minute to think about the quote. "Anyone want to guess what he means?"

A boy in the back row raised his hand. "I think he means that you have to wonder about how things work and have questions to answer if you're going to become a scientist."

"Great answer, Matt," Mrs. Jones said. "I like Mr. Emerson's quote because it points out that science really begins with something we all do: wonder about things."

Then she looked at Nia and Kate and asked what they might want to do when they grew up. Nia told her teacher a little nervously that she had no idea what she wanted to do, and Mrs. Jones laughed and said that was perfectly fine and Nia had plenty of time to think about it.

Kate then told her teacher about her plans to be a video game designer, and some of the other students laughed.

Mrs. Jones looked at them and continued.

"Kate, if you're going to be a video game creator, science needs to be your good friend for the rest of your years in school," she said, smiling. "You'll need to understand computers and all sorts of other scientific things."

"Science plays an important part in just about every job," she added.

As Kate left the classroom for lunch at the end of their science lesson, she decided she would forgive Nia for telling Mrs. Jones about their conversation. After hearing her teacher talk about science, she had to agree with Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson that science was pretty wonderful.

1. What is the central message of the selection?

- A. Science is short, simple, and easily explained by teachers.
- B. Science is wondering about a subject and searching for answers.
- C. Scientists can explain science by keeping notebooks.
- D. Scientists can answer all questions about the world.

2. Which detail from the selection describes what science is?

- A. "Science really mattered to them."
- B. "'Science really begins with something we all do: wonder about things.'"
- C. "'Science needs to be your good friend for the rest of your years in school.'"
- D. "Science was pretty wonderful."

3. Which statement from the selection supports the need to study science?

- A. "'You've been learning about science in school forever.'"
- B. "'You know, when you study how things work and why they are the way they are.'"
- C. "'I'll make some time for us to look up some definitions of science and even write our own.'"
- D. "'Science plays an important part in just about every job.'"

4. Which statement supports the quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson in paragraph 16?

- A. "'You know, when you study how things work and why they are the way they are.'"
- B. "'Science needs to be your good friend for the rest of your years in school.'"
- C. "'You'll need to understand computers and all sorts of other scientific things.'"
- D. "She had to agree . . . that science was pretty wonderful."

5. What lesson do Nia and Kate learn by the end of the selection?

- A. Science can be explained.
- B. Science starts with conversation.
- C. Science is an important part of school.
- D. Science is understanding video games.