

SPECTRUM[®]

Reading

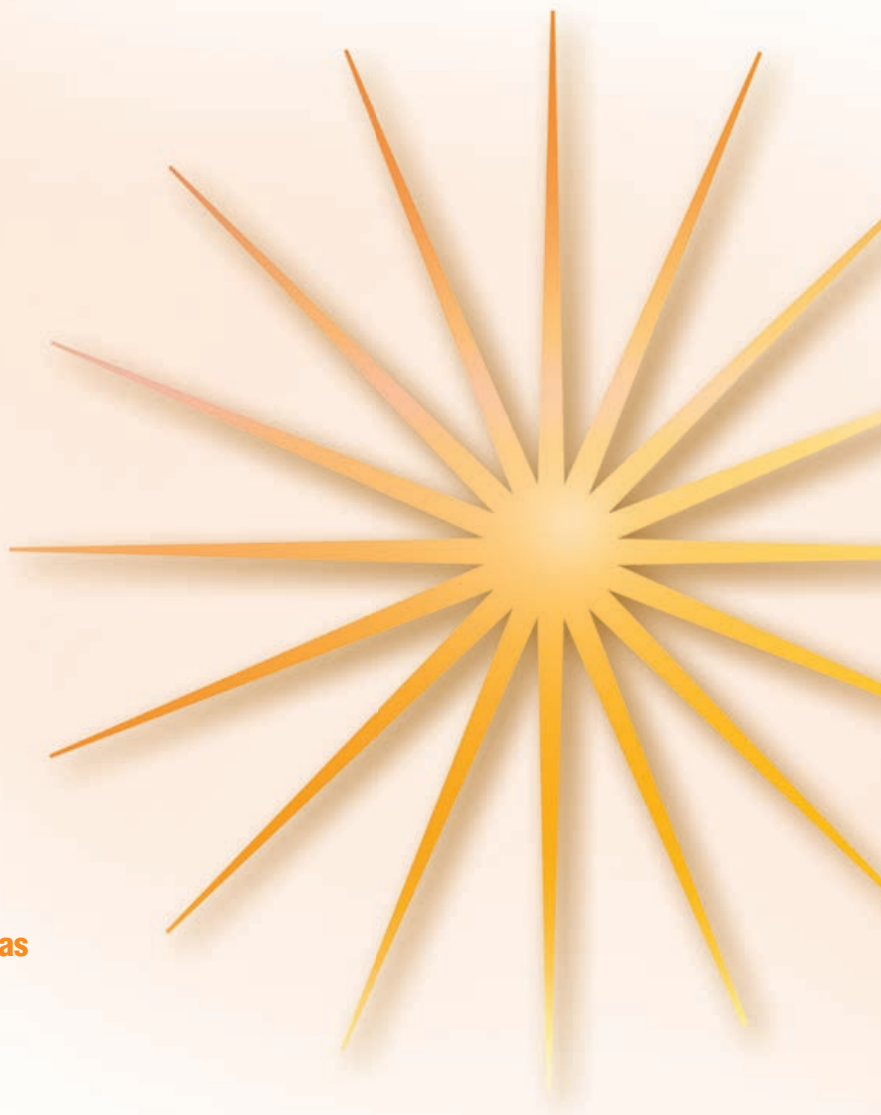
GRADE

5



Focused Practice for Reading Comprehension

- Fiction and non-fiction passages
- Theme and summarization
- Integration of knowledge and ideas
- Key ideas and details
- Answer key



A New Mate

What would it be like to live in Australia?

¹ “I think most of you have already met our new student, Gemma,” said Ms. Dimitri to her class. “As you know, she has recently moved here from Australia. I know you all have lots of questions about Australia, and Gemma has said she’d be happy to answer them. We can also try to give her an idea of what life is like here in Massachusetts.”

² Gemma was a tall girl with thick, dark brown hair. She had pale blue eyes, and there was a dusting of freckles across her nose. She smiled shyly at the class. “I’m very happy to be here,” she said. “Everyone has been really nice to me. It feels like I’ve been here longer than a week already.”

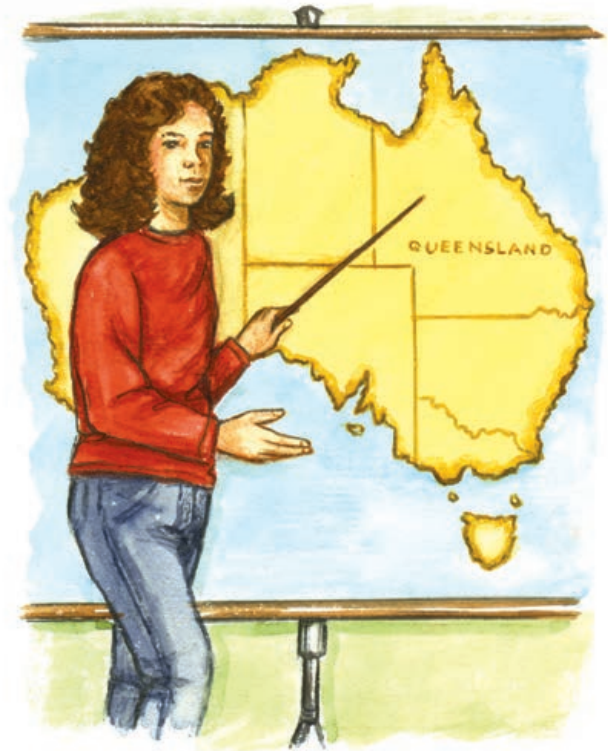
³ Ms. Dimitri smiled. “I’m glad to hear it. We’re excited to have you here, Gemma. Before we get started, why don’t you tell everyone where you lived in Australia.”

⁴ “My family lived in Queensland,” began Gemma. “It is one of Australia’s six states, and it’s located in the northeast part of the continent. Queensland is the second largest state in Australia. It’s a bit more than twice as big as Texas.”

⁵ “What is the weather like there?” asked Kayla. “Do you have cold, snowy winters like we do here?”

⁶ “Actually, because Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere, the seasons are the reverse of what they are in the United States,” said Gemma. “Queensland is in a tropical part of Australia, so it doesn’t get very cold. In January, which is summertime, it is in the 80s and 90s. In July, which is wintertime, it might be in the 60s. Queensland gets a lot of rain, and I won’t miss that at all. I can’t wait until it snows here this winter! I’ve never built a snowman or gone sledding before.”

⁷ “Queensland is near Australia’s Great Barrier Reef,” Ms. Dimitri told the class. “Gemma, can you tell us a little about it?”



⁸ Gemma nodded. “The Great Barrier Reef is the largest coral reef in the world. It lies off the coast of Queensland and is more than 1,200 miles long. It is home to all kinds of animal and plant life. It is an amazing place to go scuba diving.”

⁹ Vijay raised his hand. “Can you teach us how to say some words in Australian?” he asked.

¹⁰ “Most people in Australia speak English,” said Gemma. “But we do have some different words and expressions than you do in America. For example, the word for *friend* is *mate*. *Bonza* means *very good*. *Umbrella* is *broolly*, and *honest* is *fair dinkum*.”

¹¹ “Is there another word or expression for thank you?” asked Ms. Dimitri.

¹² “Yes, *ta* means *thank you*.”

¹³ “Gemma, you have given us an excellent idea of what it is like to live in Australia. *Ta*, Gemma. We’re so glad to have you in our class!”

Write the words from the story that have the meanings below.

1. just before the present time

Par. 1

2. one half of Earth when divided by the equator

Par. 6

3. opposite

Par. 6

4. specific words or phrases

Par. 10

A **fact** is something that is known to be true. An **opinion** is what a person believes. It may or may not be true. Write **F** before the sentences that are facts. Write **O** before the sentences that are opinions.

5. ____ Gemma moved to the United States from Australia.

6. ____ Queensland is more than twice as big as Texas.

7. ____ It would be exciting to visit Australia.

8. ____ The weather in Australia is more enjoyable than it is in Massachusetts.

9. ____ Australia is in the Southern Hemisphere.

10. What is the Great Barrier Reef?

11. What does *fair dinkum* mean?

12. How are the seasons different in Australia than they are in the United States?

13. If you could ask Gemma a question about living in Australia, what would it be?

Australia's Giant Toads

How did cane toads get to Australia, and why do people see them as such a pest?

¹ Think about toads that you may have seen in the woods, on a hike, or at a zoo. How large do you think they were? Even the largest toads probably were not as big as the cane toad. This toad, native to South America and the Caribbean, can weigh as much as four pounds!

² In 1935, sugar cane farmers in Australia were having a problem with two types of beetles that were destroying their crops. About one hundred cane toads were shipped to Australia from Hawaii. People hoped the toads would be a solution to the problem. Unfortunately, things turned out very differently than they had anticipated. The cane toads quickly became a more annoying pest than the beetles had ever been.

³ There are several things that make the cane toad so unusual. First of all, the cane toad has almost no natural predators. If the cane toad feels threatened, it will secrete a poisonous liquid. This liquid can kill children and small animals. It can even blind an adult for several hours.

⁴ The cane toad is also poisonous in all stages of its life. Fish normally feed on the eggs of frogs and toads, but even the eggs of the cane toad are poisonous. Each pair of cane toads can produce more than 30,000 eggs each season. Because many of the eggs and tadpoles are able to mature, the cane toad population can grow very rapidly.

⁵ This is exactly what happened in Australia. Without any predators, there were suddenly thousands of cane toads in the Queensland area. People might have been more tolerant if the animals had been successful in getting rid of the sugar cane beetles. It turned out, however, that the cane toads did not have any effect on the beetles, which could easily fly out of harm's way.

⁶ The Australians are not quite sure how to get rid of cane toads. In fact, they continue to spread across the continent. Cane toads eat many types of Australian wildlife. They can also be dangerous to pets and children. Even so, not everyone in Australia hopes that the plans to rid the country of these animals will be successful. Some people even leave food in their backyards or adopt the giant toads as pets!



1. Do you think cane toads will continue to be a problem in Australia? Explain your answer.

2. Why were cane toads first brought to Australia?

3. Why are there so many cane toads in Australia if only one hundred or so were originally released?

4. Check the sentence that best states the main idea of the selection.

____ Cane toads can weigh as much as four pounds.

____ Cane toads do not have any natural predators in Australia.

____ Cane toads were brought to Australia to eat sugar cane beetles, but they ended up becoming a dangerous pest.

5. In paragraph 3, what does the word *secrete* mean?

6. Which has been a bigger problem—cane toads or sugar cane beetles? Why?

7. What do you think is a good solution to the cane toad problem?

Aussie Animals

How are the animals in Australia different from those you might see where you live?

¹ Gemma, Kayla, and Vijay were eating lunch on the small patio behind the school's cafeteria. Kayla and Vijay were asking Gemma questions about Australian animals. They couldn't believe that Gemma didn't think it was anything special to see a kangaroo hopping along the side of a road or grazing in a field.

² "When you see something all the time," Gemma explained, "you hardly even notice it. Do you know how many times you've seen a squirrel, or a deer, or a raccoon in your life?"

³ "Of course not," said Vijay. "But seeing a kangaroo would be completely different."

⁴ Gemma laughed. "Not if you lived in Australia," she said.

⁵ "Is it true that a mother kangaroo carries her baby in her pouch?" asked Kayla.

⁶ "Sure," replied Gemma, pausing to take a bite of her sandwich. "Aussies call baby kangaroos *joeys*. They live in their mother's pouch until they grow a bit larger. Then, they can take care of themselves and keep up with the others in their group. Did you know that kangaroos can travel more than 30 miles per hour?"



⁷ "That's pretty fast!" exclaimed Vijay.

⁸ "Do any other animals carry their babies in a pouch?" wondered Kayla aloud.

⁹ "The koala and the wombat do," said Gemma. "They are marsupials like the kangaroo."

¹⁰ "I know what a koala bear is," said Vijay, "but what is a wombat?"

¹¹ "Well, a koala isn't really a bear," Gemma explained. "People just call them that because they resemble a teddy bear. Koalas spend most of their lives sleeping. There is a type of tree called a *eucalyptus* (*yoo kah LIP tuss*) that grows in Australia. It's pretty much the only thing that koalas eat. They don't get much energy from the leaves, though, which is why they spend so much time sleeping."

¹² "It sounds like they need a change in their diet," laughed Vijay. "Is the wombat similar to the koala and kangaroo?"

¹³ "The only real similarity is that it is a marsupial, too. Otherwise, the wombat looks like a beaver or a groundhog. It burrows underground and makes tunnels that are 10 to 15 feet long. Some people get wombats as babies and train them. I had a friend who had a very nice pet wombat named Gillian."

¹⁴ "Won't you miss the animals in Australia?" asked Kayla. "No one in Massachusetts has a wombat for a pet."

¹⁵ Gemma smiled. "I might miss them a little," she said, "but I've never seen snow. I never saw a real raccoon or a deer before I moved here. I also never saw a cardinal or a chickadee. I think Massachusetts is going to be a very interesting place to live."

¹⁶ "I guess it all depends on what you are used to," said Vijay. "But I'd take the animals of Australia over a deer any day of the week!"

1. What are baby kangaroos called in Australia?

2. Why do koalas spend so much of their time sleeping?

3. What kind of pet is Gillian?

4. Why do you think a baby kangaroo lives in its mother's pouch for a while after it is born?

5. Which of these words describe Gemma?

____ knowledgeable

____ competitive

____ friendly

____ stubborn

____ irritable

6. Name one characteristic of marsupials.

7. What is the setting for this story?

8. In the story, Vijay thinks that Australian animals are more interesting than American animals. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

The First Australians

Who are the Aboriginal people of Australia?

¹ The Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Australia. Archaeologists believe that they have lived in Australia for about 50,000 to 60,000 years! Today, they make up a little more than two percent of the population of Australia.

² In the past, Aboriginal people were hunters and gatherers. This means that they survived by hunting, fishing, and gathering plants. They did not settle permanently in one place. Instead, they moved around the continent when they needed to refresh their supply of food. The Aboriginal people had, and still have, a strong respect for and connection to the land and nature. It influences almost every part of their culture, from food and shelter, to art and religion.

³ Things quickly changed for the Aboriginal people when Europeans began arriving in Australia in 1788. They brought diseases that the Aboriginal people had never been exposed to before. The Aboriginal people also had to fight for the land that was theirs. There were many years of difficult times. The Aboriginal people had to learn to live in a society that was very different from their ancestors'. They had to fight to keep their culture alive.

⁴ The situation started to improve for the Aboriginal people in the 1960s. They were finally given the right to vote. Later, the Australian government also began trying to make up for some of the unfair treatment the people had suffered. They returned some of the land to the Aboriginal people that had been taken from them more than a century before.

⁵ The contributions of Aboriginal people to Australia can be seen in many areas. For example, they created the boomerang, a curved piece of wood that has been used both as a weapon and for sport. Aboriginal rock paintings can be found in many areas of Australia. Some are believed to be 30,000 years old. The didgeridoo (*didge er ee DOO*) is a well-known Australian wind instrument. It is a straight trumpet made from a hollow piece of wood or bamboo. Some people believe it may be one of the world's oldest wind instruments.

⁶ The Aboriginal people are an important and valuable part of Australian society. Today, many still live a traditional lifestyle in the bush, or Australian wilderness. Others have become a part of modern-day Australian culture and live in cities around the country. Their influences can be found in many aspects of Australian life.



Write the words from the passage that have the meanings below.

1. people who live in a particular place

Par. 1

2. scientists who study past cultures

Par. 1

3. for a long time

Par. 2

4. has an effect on

Par. 2

5. left open to harm without protection

Par. 3

6. Why did Aboriginal people move around instead of staying in one place?

7. What influences almost every part of the Aboriginal culture?

8. Another name for Australian wilderness is _____.

9. How did life change for the better for aboriginal people in the 1960s?

10. Explain what a didgeridoo is.

Shall We Dance?

Have you ever attended a dance performance?

¹ “Gavin!” called Mr. Capshaw. “We’re ready to go. Are you coming?”

² Gavin shuffled slowly down the stairs and joined his parents at the front door. “I’m ready,” he said with a sigh.

³ “This will be fun. I know you’ll enjoy the performance,” Mrs. Capshaw told her son. “Afterward, we might even get to go backstage and meet Dad’s friend from college. Joseph has one of the lead roles in the show,” she explained.

⁴ The Capshaws walked down the street toward the subway station. “I don’t even like ballet,” Gavin complained.

⁵ “Not all dance is ballet, Gavin,” said Mr. Capshaw. “The show we’re going to see tonight is modern dance. But there are many other kinds of dance, too—tap, jazz, break dancing, square dancing, the tango, the waltz. I’d like you to keep an open mind about this.”

⁶ Gavin sighed again. “Okay, Dad. I’ll do my best.”

⁷ About 45 minutes later, the Capshaws arrived at the theater. A woman wearing a bright red vest and carrying a flashlight helped them find their seats in the mezzanine. Gavin looked around him while he waited for the performance to begin. He couldn’t believe how many people there were in the theater. Gavin looked straight up at the ornate ceiling painted in gold, midnight blue, and maroon. Suddenly, the lights dimmed, and the audience began to clap.

⁸ Once the performance began, Gavin forgot all about the usher, his parents, the rest of the audience, and the ornate ceiling. He listened to the music and watched the dancers move. The performers made the moves look so easy, but he could tell it was much more difficult than it appeared. He leaned forward in his seat and tapped his toes in time to the rhythm of the music.

⁹ “Well, what did you think?” asked Gavin’s parents when the lights came back on.

¹⁰ “That was amazing. I’m so glad we came,” he replied.

¹¹ “Come on, let’s go see if we can find Joseph,” said Mr. Capshaw, putting one arm around Gavin’s shoulders. The Capshaws made their way to a small hallway at the front of the theater. A moment later, they were shaking hands with Joseph and complimenting him on his performance.

¹² “Is it a lot of work to prepare the show?” Gavin asked Joseph.

¹³ Joseph chuckled. “I’ve never worked so hard in my life,” he said, “but I’ve also never had so much fun. Are you a performer, Gavin?”

¹⁴ Gavin shook his head.

¹⁵ “Do you think dance is something you’d like to try?” asked Joseph. “You seem very enthusiastic about tonight’s show. The performing arts center is only a few blocks from here, and they offer a beginner’s class in modern dance. I know some of the teachers there. I’d be happy to introduce you if you’re interested.”

¹⁶ Gavin grinned. “When can I start?” he asked.



1. Find one sentence that shows Gavin was not looking forward to going to the dance performance. Write it on the lines below.

2. What problem did Gavin have at the beginning of the story?

3. How did Gavin feel about the performance once it began?

Write **F** before the sentences that are facts. Write **O** before the sentences that are opinions.

4. ____ Modern dance is interesting to watch.
5. ____ Joseph has one of the lead roles in the performance.
6. ____ The Capshaws took the subway to get to the theater.
7. ____ Gavin will be a good dancer.
8. What does the word *ornate* mean in paragraph 7?

9. Do you think Gavin will try taking a dance class? Why or why not?

10. Do you think Joseph enjoys his job? How do you know?
