



# Reading Informational Texts:

Nonfiction Passages and Exercises Based on the Common Core State Standards

# Sample

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Nonfiction Passages and Exercises Based on the Common Core State Standards



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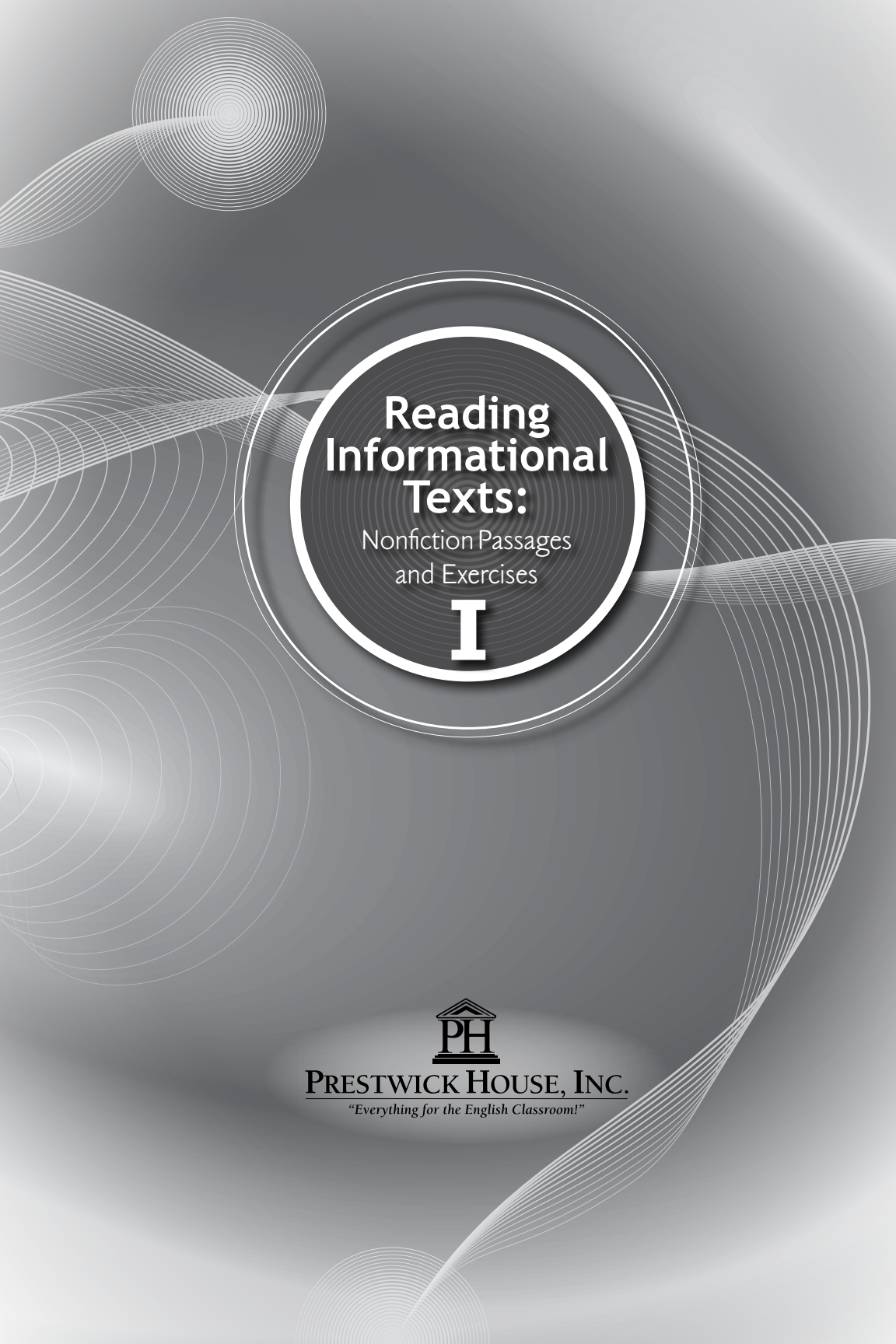
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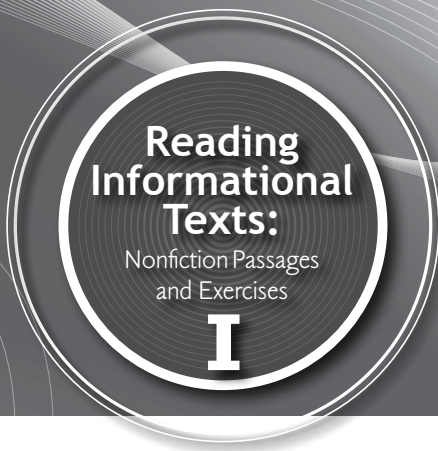
Nonfiction Passages  
and Exercises

**I**



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# Reading Informational Texts:

Nonfiction Passages and Exercises

# I

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## The Death of Captain Waskow

### AT THE FRONT LINES IN ITALY, January 10, 1944

In this war I have known a lot of officers who were loved and respected by the soldiers under them. But never have I crossed the trail of any man as beloved as Capt. Henry T. Waskow of Belton, Texas.

Capt. Waskow was a **company** commander in the 36th Division. He had led his company since long before it left the States. He was very young, only in his middle twenties, but he carried in him a sincerity and gentleness that made people want to be guided by him.

"After my own father, he came next," a sergeant told me.

"He always looked after us," a soldier said. "He'd go to bat for us every time."

"I've never knowed him to do anything unfair," another one said.

I was at the foot of the mule trail the night they brought Capt. Waskow's body down. The moon was nearly full at the time, and you could see far up the trail, and even part way across the valley below. Soldiers made shadows in the moonlight as they walked.

Dead men had been coming down the mountain all evening, lashed onto the backs of mules. They came lying belly-down across the wooden pack-saddles, their heads hanging down on the left side of the mule, their stiffened legs sticking out awkwardly from the other side, bobbing up and down as the mule walked.

The Italian **mule-skinners** were afraid to walk beside dead men, so Americans had to lead the mules down that night. Even the Americans were reluctant to unlash and lift off the bodies at the bottom, so an officer had to do it himself, and ask others to help.

The first one came early in the morning. They slid him down from the mule and stood him on his feet for a moment, while they got a new grip. In the half light he might have been merely a sick man standing there, leaning on the others. Then they laid him on the ground in the shadow of the low stone wall alongside the road.

I don't know who that first one was. You feel small in the presence of dead men, and ashamed at being alive, and you don't ask silly questions.

Pay attention to the way Pyle unfolds his description of Captain Waskow in the beginning of the article. Where does the narrative begin?

Why do you think Pyle describes the soldiers' bodies in such detail?

Why might the Italians have been "afraid to walk beside dead men"?

Why might Pyle have felt "ashamed at being alive"?

## INTRODUCTION

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### ***Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl***

*Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* is one of several slave narratives published around the time of the Civil War to inform Northerners of slavery's evils. Escaped slave Harriet Jacobs wrote the memoir under the pseudonym Linda Brent and had it published in 1861, when she was 48 years old. At that time, the American Civil War was just beginning. The book was praised by members of the abolitionist movement, who were eager to end slavery. Among those less sympathetic to the abolitionist movement, however, *Incidents* was highly controversial for its openness about the sexual abuse of slaves. Many critics of the time also questioned the narrative's authorship, having a low opinion of the intellect and abilities of slaves, and doubting whether a female former slave could write so well.

### **Harriet Jacobs**

Harriet Jacobs was born a slave in North Carolina in 1813. Despite being property in legal terms, Jacobs had a relatively easy and happy early life, living independently with her parents, who owned their own house. At the age of twelve, however, she became the property of a local doctor. Jacobs's memoir recounts the cruelty and sexual harassment she suffered at this master's hands—not least of which was his interference in her intended marriage with a local freedman. Her relationship with her first love severed, Jacobs eventually became involved with a white lawyer and bore him two children, whom he raised apart from her. Jacobs spent several years in hiding in the tight confines of her grandmother's attic before escaping to the North, where she lived out the rest of her life. Jacobs died in 1897 and is buried in Massachusetts.

have been so long engaged, and which we have pledged ourselves never to abandon, until the glorious object of our contest shall be obtained—we must fight! I repeat it, sir, we must fight! An appeal to arms and to the God of Hosts is all that is left us!

They tell us, sir, that we are weak—unable to cope with so **formidable** an **adversary**. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by **irresolution** and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying **supinely** on our backs and hugging the **delusive** phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot?

Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature has placed in our power. Three millions of people armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who **presides** over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the **vigilant**, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no **election**. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains of Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come!

It is in vain, sir, to **extenuate** the matter. Gentlemen may cry, “Peace, peace!”—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our **brethren** are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!

Henry uses a series of rhetorical questions in this paragraph. What is their intended effect on the audience?

**Rhetorical Question:** a figure of speech used for its persuasive effect; a question to which the speaker does not expect a reply

The word “election,” as used here, simply means “choice.”

This is another biblical allusion. (Jeremiah 6:14 reads, “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, **saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace.**”)

Henry uses more rhetorical questions in this passage. Describe their probable effect on the audience.

What is the overall mood of this speech?



## VOCABULARY

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Note: All definitions are based on the context in which the term is used in this reading selection.

**adversary:** an opponent or competitor

**arduous:** difficult or tiring

**basely:** in an immoral or dishonorable manner

**beseech:** to ask someone urgently to do something, to plead

**brethren:** people belong to a particular group, usually a profession, society, or religion

**ceremony:** a formality; a social gesture or act having little significance

**delusive:** deceptive, misleading

**extenuate:** to lessen the magnitude of something, usually by giving excuses

**formidable:** impressive; commanding respect, fear, or awe

**implored:** asked urgently; pleaded

**insidious:** harmfully enticing; treacherous

**interposition:** the act of placing oneself between two things

**inviolate:** free from injury or violation

**irresolution:** the state of being unsure how to proceed or continue; indecision

**presides:** holds a position of authority

**prostrated:** laid flat on the ground, face down, as in submission

**reconciliation:** the act of reestablishing a cordial relationship

**remonstrated:** protested; objected; argued against

**revere:** to feel great respect or admiration for something

**rivet:** to fasten or hold securely

**siren:** a female creature in Greek mythology whose singing lured sailors to crash their ships on the rocks

**solace:** to comfort or console

**subjugation:** forced submission or control

**supinely:** with the face upward

**supplication:** a prayer for assistance or a bid for help

**temporal:** worldly or material, as opposed to spiritual

**vigilant:** watchful; wary; alert

# Remarks to the Senate in Support of a Declaration of Conscience

## Statement of Senator Margaret Chase Smith

Mr. President:

I would like to speak briefly and simply about a serious national condition. It is a national feeling of fear and frustration that could result in national suicide and the end of everything that we Americans hold dear. It is a condition that comes from the lack of effective leadership in either the legislative branch or the executive branch of our Government.

That leadership is so lacking that serious and responsible proposals are being made that national advisory commissions be appointed to provide such critically needed leadership.

I speak as briefly as possible because too much harm has already been done with irresponsible words of bitterness and selfish political **opportunism**. I speak as simply as possible because the issue is too great to be **obscured** by **eloquence**. I speak simply and briefly in the hope that my words will be taken to heart.

I speak as a Republican, I speak as a woman. I speak as a United States Senator. I speak as an American.

The United States Senate has long enjoyed worldwide respect as the greatest **deliberative** body in the world. But recently that deliberative character has too often been **debased** to the level of a forum of hate and character assassination sheltered by the shield of **congressional immunity**.

It is ironical that we Senators can in debate in the Senate directly or indirectly, by any form of words **impute** to any American, who is not a Senator, any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming an American—and without that non-Senator American having any legal **redress** against us—yet if we say the same thing in the Senate about our colleagues we can be stopped on the grounds of being out of order.

It is strange that we can verbally attack anyone else without restraint and with full protection and yet we hold ourselves above the same type of criticism here on

Smith is addressing her remarks to the president pro tempore of the Senate.

What does Smith mean by the expression "national suicide"?

How does Smith introduce the idea of speech as a potential force for harm, and how does this idea relate to the main topic of her speech?

Why might Smith have enumerated each of these categories to which she belongs?

What is the main idea of this section?

What is Smith's point in this paragraph?



of the individual and to encourage and open the door to discriminatory actions against other minority groups in the passions of tomorrow. No adequate reason is given for the failure to treat these Japanese Americans on an individual basis by holding investigations and hearings to separate the loyal from the disloyal, as was done in the case of persons of German and Italian ancestry. It is asserted merely that the loyalties of this group 'were unknown and time was of the essence.' Yet nearly four months elapsed after Pearl Harbor before the first exclusion order was issued; nearly eight months went by until the last order was issued; and the last of these 'subversive' persons was not actually removed until almost eleven months had elapsed. Leisure and deliberation seem to have been more of the essence than speed. And the fact that conditions were not such as to warrant a declaration of martial law adds strength to the belief that the factors of time and military necessity were not as urgent as they have been represented to be.

Moreover, there was no adequate proof that the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the military and naval intelligence services did not have the espionage and sabotage situation well in hand during this long period. Nor is there any denial of the fact that not one person of Japanese ancestry was accused or convicted of espionage or sabotage after Pearl Harbor while they were still free, a fact which is some evidence of the loyalty of the vast majority of these individuals and of the effectiveness of the established methods of combatting these evils. It seems incredible that under these circumstances it would have been impossible to hold loyalty hearings for the mere 112,000 persons involved—or at least for the 70,000 American citizens—especially when a large part of this number represented children and elderly men and women. Any inconvenience that may have accompanied an attempt to conform to procedural due process cannot be said to justify violations of constitutional rights of individuals.

I dissent, therefore, from this legalization of racism. Racial discrimination in any form and in any degree has no justifiable part whatever in our democratic way of life.

What, according to Murphy, is the inevitable outcome of the exclusion order's logic?

How does Murphy frame this as a moral issue?