



Reading Comprehension Worksheet

Grade 4

Answer Key

Big Sal and the Thirsty Creek

Now, folks around Miller's Gulch still argue about how big Big Sal really was, but everyone agrees on one thing: the day she was born, she sneezed so hard she blew the roof clean off the barn, and her mama just sighed and nailed on a bigger one. By the time Sal turned six, she could carry a full grown mule under each arm like they were loaves of bread, and she once won a wrestling match against a grizzly bear so fast the bear apologized for wasting her time.

But the summer Sal turned twelve, Miller's Gulch faced its worst drought anybody could remember. The creek that fed the whole town had shrunk down to a trickle so thin you could not even wet a teaspoon in it. The townsfolk were desperate, digging wells that came up dry and praying for rain that never fell. Sal watched her neighbors suffering and decided, plain and simple, that this was a job for her.

She walked three days north to the great mountain range, picked up the tallest peak like it was a sack of potatoes, and turned it clean upside down. Out poured a river so big and so fast that it filled every dry creek bed between there and the ocean, roaring through Miller's Gulch with enough force to spin the town's mill wheel backward for a week straight. Some say the river was moving so quick that fish had to swim uphill just to keep from getting left behind.

From that day forward, the creek at Miller's Gulch never ran dry again, not even during the driest summer anybody could remember. And if you ever visit Miller's Gulch and ask the old-timers about it, they will tell you, with a perfectly straight face, that Big Sal still checks on that creek every single year, just to make sure it is behaving itself.

Circle the Correct Answer

1. What happened the day Big Sal was born, according to the story?

Answer: a) She blew the roof off the barn with a sneeze

2. What problem did Miller's Gulch face the summer Sal turned twelve?

Answer: b) A severe drought

3. How did Sal solve the town's water problem?

Answer: b) She turned a mountain upside down to release a river

4. What happened to the mill wheel when the river arrived?

Answer: b) It spun backward for a week straight

True or False

5. Big Sal could carry a full grown mule under each arm.

Answer: True

6. The creek at Miller's Gulch has run dry again many times since.

Answer: False

7. According to the story, fish had to swim uphill to keep from being left behind.

Answer: True

Fill in the Blank

8. Sal once won a wrestling match against a _____ so fast it apologized for wasting her time.

Answer: grizzly bear

9. Old-timers say Big Sal still checks on the creek every single _____.

Answer: year

Think and Explain

10. This story is a tall tale, a genre known for wild exaggeration, called hyperbole. Find two examples of hyperbole in the story and explain what real idea each exaggeration might be pointing to (for example, exaggerated strength might really be about hard work).

Sample answer: Accept reasonable answers identifying exaggerations such as carrying mules like loaves of bread, sneezing the roof off a barn, or turning a mountain upside down, and connecting them to real ideas like extraordinary strength, determination, or the scale of effort it took to solve the town's drought.