

Reading Tip

- Look at the text format quickly and then answer the questions in Part 1.
- One effective way to preview material is to skim it. Skim the passage and then follow the instructions in Part 2.
- Listen to the CD and read along with the passage; then follow the instructions in Part 3.



Jesters of Old, Clowns of Today

Skill Overview

Previewing helps readers get a sense of what is to come in a text. Also, readers who preview material can easily activate their prior knowledge and apply what they already know to what they want to learn from the text.

When we hear the word clown, we usually think of the **circus**. But clowns were around long before they became a part of the circus.

The first clowns were called *jesters*. They were the “fools” in the royal courts of the Middle Ages. They had the job of amusing the king and his family. Jesters dressed in costumes. These included a cap and pointed shoes with bells. As they performed for the king, the bells moved and jingled. This added to the fun. Jesters were often very close to the royalty they served. They played with the children and took part in family events. Not only were they funny, but they were often very clever. Some may have given advice to the royalty they served, too.

In the early American circus, clowns were like **comedians**. They sang, danced, and told jokes in a single ring. The circus grew to include three rings. Then clowns started to do *pantomime*. This is when they perform their acts without using any words.

Today, clowns **perform** at the circus and the rodeo. At the circus, they provide comic relief. Usually they do this between tension-filled acts by other performers. Some clowns also perform funny versions of circus acts. They are usually very good at them, too. They do things like walk the tightrope, perform tricks in the air, and ride horses bareback. At the rodeo, clowns **amuse** the crowds. They may also be used to **distract** dangerous animals. While they do this, injured performers are rescued from the arena.

The clown’s costume and **makeup** are **unique**. In fact, clowns are not allowed to wear their makeup in the same way. Most clowns are in *whiteface*. This means that they apply “clown white” grease paint all over their faces. Then they use other colors to create mouths and eyes. Noses are often made from a special kind of putty.

There have been many famous clowns in the United States, as well as in other countries.

▼ A rodeo clown



Vocabulary

circus

an arena often covered by a tent and used for variety shows

costume

a set of clothes worn in order to look like someone or something else

comedian

a person whose job is to make people laugh by telling jokes

perform

to entertain an audience

amuse

to cause others to laugh

distract

to take attention away from something else

makeup

colored substances used on the face to improve or change its appearance

unique

special; different from others



Reading Skill Comprehension Practice



power up

A **Title** is the name of a film, a book, a painting, a piece of music, etc.

A **heading** is a word or phrase that introduces a section.

Text is the written words in a book, magazine, etc.

Text features are parts of the book that have been created to provide additional information.

Text format is the pattern or arrangement of the text.



Part 1

Answer the questions below.

- YES NO 1. Does the text include any pictures that give you information about the topic?
- YES NO 2. Is the text written in paragraphs?
- YES NO 3. Are there any headings, titles, or other text features that you notice?
4. What is the format of this passage? What does this text format tell you about the topic?

Part 2

Think about what you noticed as you skimmed the passage. Record your ideas below.

Part 3

Explain how previewing the passage helped you as a reader.

1. Previewing the title helped me _____
2. Previewing the photograph helped me _____
3. Previewing the passage helped me _____

Comprehension Review

Fill in the best answer for each question.

_____ **1** The title tells you that this passage will be about _____

- A the circus.
- B dressing up like a clown.
- C where to find a rodeo.
- D jesters and clowns.

_____ **2** You can tell by previewing this passage that it is _____

- A a poem.
- B a list of instructions.
- C an informational text.
- D a science experiment.

_____ **3** What will you learn about in this passage?

- A clown costumes
- B the history of jesters and clowns
- C circus animals
- D why court jesters wore caps

_____ **4** Which one is *not* true of jesters?

- A They dressed in costumes.
- B They were close to the royalty they served.
- C They worked in royal courts during the Renaissance.
- D They were funny and clever.

_____ **5** People who like _____ would want to read this.

- A poetry
- B math
- C science
- D the circus

_____ **6** Which *best* describes clowns of the early American circus?

- A They were like comedians.
- B They were acrobats.
- C They did dangerous tricks.
- D They performed with animals.

Word Power

Choose the English word from the Vocabulary list that correctly matches the definition.



to cause others to laugh



special; different from others



to take attention away from something else



to entertain an audience

Reading Tip

📌 Cause-and-effect relationships contribute to the development of the plot, or problem, in a story.

Racing a Tornado



Skill Overview

Cause and effect is a text structure in which the effect happens as a result of the cause. The cause is the event or situation, and the effect is the consequence of the event or situation. Knowing the cause-and-effect pattern in texts can help readers better comprehend what they read.



If we had known what was going to happen, we never would have gotten on our bikes. But it was a perfect day for a long bike ride. Maria and I **set out** at 7 A.M. and didn't stop for lunch until noon. We sat under an oak tree and had a picnic. That's when the day began to change and we started to worry. In the distance, a towering bank of dark clouds **appeared**. We looked at each other. There was no way we could **avoid** that storm.

The weather quickly got worse. The sky was very dark, and the

Vocabulary

- ★ **set out**
to start an activity with a particular aim
- ★ **appear**
to be or come in sight
- avoid**
to keep away from
- colossal**
very large in size; huge
- funnel**
a tubelike form that is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom
- screech**
to make a shrill, high-pitched sound
- bolt**
to fasten with a bolt
- roaring**
a loud noise

trees were bending in the wind. Suddenly, a yellow car pulled up alongside our bikes. The woman at the wheel was Maria's mother. She opened a door and shouted, "Get in!" She looked as frightened as we felt.

We jumped in just as **colossal** chunks of hail began to fall. The car sped away as hailstones bounced off the hood. Maria and I looked back at the dark sky. Maria screamed, "It's a tornado!" The black **funnel** seemed to be getting closer. I was terrified. How could we outrun that monster? Maria's mother turned to us. "Your grandmother's house is not far," she said. "I know she has a storm cellar that we can use for cover." She sped down the road and turned sharply into a narrow driveway. Soon, the car **screeched** to a halt. Maria's mother yelled at us to get inside the storm cellar. We **bolted** through the doors—and not a minute too soon. A **roaring** like a freight train passed over us. Then, suddenly, it was over. We had made it—barely. It was a race we didn't ever want to run again.

