Explain Events, Procedures, and Ideas

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle the answer to each How question.

READ THIS FIRST

The Telegraph Outruns the Pony Express

In 1860, news traveled across the United States very slowly. California had become a state ten years earlier, but it was far from the cities of the East. A letter could take weeks to arrive by ship or stagecoach. People in California wanted faster news.

In April 1860, a company started the Pony Express. It was a relay of riders on fast horses. A rider carried a leather pouch of mail from St. Joseph, Missouri, toward Sacramento, California. Every ten to fifteen miles, he stopped at a station and jumped onto a fresh horse. After about seventy-five miles, he handed the pouch to a new rider. Because fresh horses and riders kept taking over, the mail moved day and night. A letter could cross nearly 2,000 miles in about ten days.

People cheered the riders. Yet even as they rode, a faster idea was spreading. The telegraph sent messages as electric signals along metal wires. An operator tapped a key to send short and long clicks, called Morse code. At the other end, another operator turned the clicks back into words. A message could travel hundreds of miles in seconds. However, telegraph lines did not yet cross the West.

In 1860, the government offered money to build a line all the way to California. In the summer of 1861, two crews began working from opposite directions. One started in Nebraska and built west. The other started in the far West and built east. The crews dug holes, set up thousands of wooden poles and strung wire between them.

On October 24, 1861, the two lines met in Salt Lake City. For the first time, a message could cross the country in minutes instead of days.

Two days later, the Pony Express stopped carrying mail. It had lasted only about a year and a half. The riders were fast, but no horse could keep up with electricity.

The Pony Express is still remembered for its daring riders. The telegraph, though, changed how Americans shared news. It connected the country in a way that horses never could.

1. How did the Pony Express keep the mail moving day and night?

   Riders carried the mail on the fastest ships.

   One rider rode the whole trail without stopping.

   Operators tapped the messages along wires.

   Riders changed to fresh horses and passed the pouch to new riders.

2. How did a telegraph message travel?

as written letters sent by ship

by stagecoach over mountain roads

in leather pouches carried by riders

as electric signals along metal wires

3. How did the crews build the line to California?

Pony Express riders laid wire along their trail.

Workers buried the wire under the ground.

Two crews worked toward each other from opposite directions.

One crew started in Salt Lake City and built outward.

4. How did an operator send a message by telegraph?

by tapping a key to make short and long clicks

by writing the words on paper and mailing them

by handing a pouch of mail to the next rider

by calling out the words from station to station

Scan to get this marked free. No screen time for your child.
Print it · do it in pencil · scan it · PencilGo picks the next sheet.

Explain Events, Procedures, and Ideas

Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Read the text. Circle the answer to each How question.

READ THIS FIRST

The Telegraph Outruns the Pony Express

In 1860, news traveled across the United States very slowly. California had become a state ten years earlier, but it was far from the cities of the East. A letter could take weeks to arrive by ship or stagecoach. People in California wanted faster news.

In April 1860, a company started the Pony Express. It was a relay of riders on fast horses. A rider carried a leather pouch of mail from St. Joseph, Missouri, toward Sacramento, California. Every ten to fifteen miles, he stopped at a station and jumped onto a fresh horse. After about seventy-five miles, he handed the pouch to a new rider. Because fresh horses and riders kept taking over, the mail moved day and night. A letter could cross nearly 2,000 miles in about ten days.

People cheered the riders. Yet even as they rode, a faster idea was spreading. The telegraph sent messages as electric signals along metal wires. An operator tapped a key to send short and long clicks, called Morse code. At the other end, another operator turned the clicks back into words. A message could travel hundreds of miles in seconds. However, telegraph lines did not yet cross the West.

In 1860, the government offered money to build a line all the way to California. In the summer of 1861, two crews began working from opposite directions. One started in Nebraska and built west. The other started in the far West and built east. The crews dug holes, set up thousands of wooden poles and strung wire between them.

On October 24, 1861, the two lines met in Salt Lake City. For the first time, a message could cross the country in minutes instead of days.

Two days later, the Pony Express stopped carrying mail. It had lasted only about a year and a half. The riders were fast, but no horse could keep up with electricity.

The Pony Express is still remembered for its daring riders. The telegraph, though, changed how Americans shared news. It connected the country in a way that horses never could.

1. How did the Pony Express keep the mail moving day and night?

   Riders carried the mail on the fastest ships.

   One rider rode the whole trail without stopping.

   Operators tapped the messages along wires.

   Riders changed to fresh horses and passed the pouch to new riders.

2. How did a telegraph message travel?

as written letters sent by ship

by stagecoach over mountain roads

in leather pouches carried by riders

as electric signals along metal wires

3. How did the crews build the line to California?

Pony Express riders laid wire along their trail.

Workers buried the wire under the ground.

Two crews worked toward each other from opposite directions.

One crew started in Salt Lake City and built outward.

4. How did an operator send a message by telegraph?

by tapping a key to make short and long clicks

by writing the words on paper and mailing them

by handing a pouch of mail to the next rider

by calling out the words from station to station