Explain Events, Procedures, and Ideas

Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

Name _____ Date _____

Read the text. Circle the answer to each What 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. What did the telegraph operator at the receiving end do?

strung wire between wooden poles

tapped a key to send long clicks

jumped onto a fresh horse

turned the clicks back into words

2. What happened as a result of the two lines meeting in Salt Lake City?

California became a state.

Letters took ten days instead of weeks.

Messages could cross the country in minutes.

The Pony Express hired more riders.

3. What did a Pony Express rider do after about seventy-five miles?

rode all the way back to Missouri

handed the leather pouch to a new rider

stopped to help build a telegraph line

sent the news ahead by telegraph

4. What did the crews set up to hold the telegraph wire?

thousands of wooden poles

stations with fresh horses

long walls made of stone blocks

rows of tall metal towers

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Answer Key - Grade 4 Reading Worksheet

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