Building the Canadian Pacific Railway

Grade 3

Name _____ Date _____

Remember: Read the passage **twice**: once to enjoy it, and once to look for details. Then answer the questions. Look back at the text to **prove** your answers.

Leveled reading: this passage is written at guided reading level P, a typical level for Grade 3. Read it aloud once, then read it again silently.

Building the Canadian Pacific Railway



In 1871, British Columbia agreed to join Canada. But there was one big promise attached: the government had to build a railway connecting British Columbia to the rest of the country. At that time, travelling across Canada could take months.

Building the Canadian Pacific Railway was an enormous challenge. Workers had to lay tracks across the rocky land north of Lake Superior, the flat prairies and, hardest of all, the steep Rocky Mountains.

Thousands of workers built the railway, including many who came from China. They blasted tunnels through solid rock, built wooden bridges across deep canyons, and worked through freezing winters and scorching summers. The work was dangerous, and many workers were injured or lost their lives.

Finally, on November 7, 1885, the last spike was hammered into the track at a place called Craigellachie, in British Columbia. The railway stretched from Montreal in the east toward the Pacific coast in the west.

The railway changed Canada forever. Trains carried people, mail and goods across the country in about a week instead of months. New towns grew up beside the tracks, and the railway helped tie the young country together.

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1. Check your understanding

Circle the best answer.

1. Why was the railway built?

(a) To connect British Columbia to the rest of Canada
(b) To carry tourists to the beach
(c) To connect Canada to Mexico

2. Which part was the hardest to build through?

(a) The prairies
(b) The Rocky Mountains
(c) The cities

3. When was the last spike hammered in?

(a) 1871
(b) 1885
(c) 1950

4. How did the railway change travel?

(a) Trips took about a week instead of months.
(b) Travel became slower.
(c) Nobody used it.

2. Write your answer

Answer in complete sentences. Use details from the text.

1. **Describe two challenges the workers faced.**

2. **Put these events in order: last spike, BC joins Canada, workers build tunnels.**

3. **How did the railway help Canada grow?**

Answer Key

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1. Check your understanding

1. **Why was the railway built?**
   - a **To connect British Columbia to the rest of Canada**
   - b To carry tourists to the beach
   - c To connect Canada to Mexico

2. **Which part was the hardest to build through?**
   - a The prairies
   - b **The Rocky Mountains**
   - c The cities

3. **When was the last spike hammered in?**
   - a 1871
   - b **1885**
   - c 1950

4. **How did the railway change travel?**
   - a **Trips took about a week instead of months.**
   - b Travel became slower.
   - c Nobody used it.

2. Write your answer

Sample answers. Students' wording will vary.

1. **Describe two challenges the workers faced.**
   They had to blast tunnels through solid rock and build bridges over canyons, and they worked in freezing winters and hot summers.
2. **Put these events in order: last spike, BC joins Canada, workers build tunnels.**
   First BC joined Canada in 1871, then workers built tunnels, and the last spike was hammered in 1885.
3. **How did the railway help Canada grow?**
   It carried people, mail and goods quickly, new towns grew beside the tracks, and it connected the country.