“STRAY” by Cynthia Rylant

NAME: ___________________________
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Writing About the Big Question

How do we decide what is true?

Big Question Vocabulary

- confirm
- decision
- determine
- evidence
- fact
- fantasy
- fiction
- investigate
- opinion
- prove
- realistic
- study
- test
- true
- unbelievable

A. Use one or more words from the list above to complete each sentence.

1. Some scientists decided to _____________ the effects on people of having pets.

2. They found scientific _____________ that people with pets are happier.

3. The _____________ also showed that people with pets live longer.

4. The results _____________ that having a pet can be good for you.

B. Respond to each item with a complete sentence.

1. Describe a pet that you have had or would like to have.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

2. Explain how the pet you described helped or would help you. Use at least two Big Question vocabulary words.

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

C. In “Stray,” Doris is upset because her parents tell her they cannot afford to keep the stray dog she found. Is it true that keeping a dog as a pet can be expensive? Complete the sentence below. Then, write a short paragraph connecting this situation to the Big Question.

Dog owners spend money on ________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
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**Reading Warm-up A**

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

Most of us look forward to wintertime. Winter is the season of holidays, parties, and a nice vacation from school. Winter can also be a time to be careful, and not just because you are more likely to **cough** and give someone your cold. If you live in a northern climate, winter means cold weather and snow. Snow is great for skiing and sledding, but it can also produce dangerous conditions.

Snowstorms can appear suddenly. They may begin **mildly** with just a few flakes, but then they take a turn for the worse. Roads can become slippery and ice-covered. That makes driving hazardous. **Automobiles** are harder to control on snow and ice. Sharp turns can lead to spins and skids. Your braking distance, or the distance it takes to stop your vehicle, grows longer.

Local governments understand this. That is why there is usually a fleet of snowplows ready to clear the roads when severe weather strikes. There is also a **warehouse** for storing salt. Salt is used to melt snow and ice on the roads.

Still, people should take responsibility for their own safety. Drivers need to be careful and pay attention to weather forecasts. Even with salt and snowplows, it can be unwise to **ignore** weather warnings. After a big storm, you will encounter **abandoned** cars along the sides of roadways. People have left them behind after swerving and getting stuck in the snow. These people may have wished that they had stayed at home and **sipped** hot chocolate instead of driving.

Another wintertime danger is overexertion. Sidewalks get slippery and dangerous, too. So after snow accumulates, people pick up their shovels to clear them off. Shoveling snow is hard work, however. It is easy to become **exhausted**. People must be careful not to tire themselves out doing it.

All in all, winter is a great time of year. Still, it pays to be a little careful when the snowflakes start to fall.

1. Underline the word that helps you understand what cough means. Then, write a sentence describing when you might cough.

2. Circle the words that describe a snowstorm that begins mildly. Define mildly.

3. Underline the verb that helps you to understand what automobiles are for. Describe your favorite kind of automobiles.

4. Circle the words that tell you what a warehouse is used for. List some other things that might be kept in one.

5. Underline the nearby word that mean the opposite of ignore. Then, write a sentence using the word ignore.

6. Underline the words that tell where abandoned cars are found. Describe what probably happens to these cars.

7. Explain why hot chocolate sipped rather than gulped.

8. Underline a phrase that tells why you can become exhausted shoveling snow. List three other activities that can leave you exhausted.
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Reading Warm-up B

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

Most people love their pets. Sometimes, however, people fail to realize how much care and attention animals need. Sadly, these pet owners may abandon their pets. The poor animals end up living on the street.

Former house pets can have an especially hard time living on their own. They may have difficulty finding food. In fact, many are at risk of starvation. Stray dogs and cats hang around outside dumps, looking for scraps to chew on. Indeed, an old biscuit, stale bread, or cold spaghetti is delicious to a homeless animal.

Sometimes, restaurant owners will grudgingly feed strays leftover food. If they do it too often, though, the strays might hang around and bother customers. Handouts and scraps are hardly enough to survive on.

Luckily, there are groups that work to help stray animals. You have probably seen them as they have trudged through empty houses and garbage dumps. These rescue groups collect stray animals. Then, they take them to shelters. At shelters, the former strays get food; they also get medical care if they are sick.

One such group is Stray Rescue of St. Louis. For several years, it has been helping to save stray animals from hunger, illness, and other conditions that cause distress. It finds animals that have been left in empty houses or public parks. Then, it does everything it can to find the pets new homes. The group points out that former strays make great pets. These animals may act timidly at first. Soon, however, they get over their fear and show their new owners love, affection, and loyalty.

The next time you see a stray dog begging for food, or a shivering cat trying to keep warm in a cardboard box covered with icicles, contact a local animal rescue group.

1. Underline the phrase that tells you why animals are at risk of starvation. Write a sentence telling what these animals need.

2. Write a sentence explaining why scraps wouldn’t help these strays very much.

3. Write a sentence describing what an old biscuit might look, taste, or feel like.

4. In your own words, tell why restaurant owners might act grudgingly when feeding strays.

5. Circle the words that tell where rescue workers have trudged. Explain what trudged means.

6. Underline two words that help you understand the meaning of distress. Then, write a sentence using the word.

7. Underline the nearby word that tells what animals overcome when they stop acting timidly.

8. Describe what the weather might be like when icicles cover a cardboard box.
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Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from "Stray." Then, complete the activities.

**Word List A**

_abandoned_ [uh BAN duhnd] _v._ tossed aside; left behind  
The ghost town was filled with _abandoned_ houses.

_automobiles_ [AW tuh moh beelz] _n_. passenger vehicles with four wheels and an engine  
_Automobiles_ are expensive; it costs a lot of money to buy a car.

_cough_ [KAWF] _v._ make a rough, harsh noise while forcing out air  
When the nurse heard me _cough_, he gave me some medicine.

_exhausted_ [eg ZAWST id] _adj._ very tired and worn out  
Tracy felt _exhausted_ after running seven miles.

_ignore_ [ig NAWR] _v._ pay no attention to something  
From now on I will _ignore_ you when you say such foolish things.

_mildly_ [MYLD lee] _adv._ gently, with little force  
The wind blew so _mildly_ that I couldn’t get my kite into the air.

_sipped_ [SIPT] _v._ drank slowly  
Sherry gulped her milk shake down, but I _sipped_ mine to make it last.

_warehouse_ [WAIR hows] _n_. a building where things are stored  
We don’t have that bicycle in the store, but we’ll get you one from the _warehouse_.

**Word List B**

_biscuit_ [BIS kit] _n_. small, round type of bread  
I’d rather have a _biscuit_ than toast with my eggs.

_distress_ [dis TRES] _n_. difficulty, pain, or sadness  
Sharon was filled with _distress_ when she saw the impossible job she had to do.

_grudgingly_ [GRUHJ ing lee] _adv._ not happily, in a resentful or reluctant way  
She didn’t want to share and gave me a taste _grudgingly_.

_icicles_ [EYE si kuhls] _n_. long thin pieces of ice that hang down  
The spring sun started to melt the _icicles_ hanging from our roof.

_scraps_ [SKRAPS] _n_. small pieces (of food, paper, wood, fabric, etc.)  
After building the bookcase, we swept up the _scraps_ of wood that were left over.

_starvation_ [star VAY shun] _n_. the act of suffering from not enough food  
Ancient peoples faced _starvation_ if they couldn’t find food.

_timidly_ [TIM id lee] _adv._ shyly, in a frightened way  
Dave spoke _timidly_ since he wasn’t sure that his answer was correct.

_trudged_ [TRUHJD] _v._ plodded; walked slowly and with effort  
The rancher _trudged_ through the snow in search of his lost cattle.
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Vocabulary Warm-up Exercises

Exercise A  Fill in each blank in the paragraph below with an appropriate word from Word List A. Use each word only once.

Shaun’s mom heard him [1] _______________. She made him some tea. After he [2] _______________ the tea, Shaun felt better and decided to go to work. Shaun worked in a [3] _______________ filled with [4] _______________. These cars had been [5] _______________ by their owners. Shaun liked his work even though it was tiring and left him feeling [6] _______________. One thing about the job that bothered him [7] _______________ was the noise from the trucks unloading the cars. At first he tried to [8] _______________ the noise. Then he started wearing earplugs.

Exercise B  Write a complete sentence to answer each question. For each item, use a word from Word List B to replace the underlined word or phrase without changing its meaning.

1. What is one kind of bread people like to eat in the morning?

2. What is something you would only do reluctantly?

3. Describe a situation in which you might speak shyly.

4. What could cause people to experience a suffering from the lack of food?

5. Why did the emergency workers plod through the wreckage?

6. When you cut out paper dolls, small pieces of paper are left over. Name another activity in which small pieces are left over.

7. In which season would you find pieces of ice hanging from trees?

8. What is something that would cause you to feel pain or sadness?
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Vocabulary Builder

Word List
exhausted  grudgingly  ignore  starvation  timidly  trudged

A. DIRECTIONS: In each question below, think about the meaning of the underlined word from the Word List. Then, answer the questions.

1. If a puppy enters a room timidly, is he running or moving cautiously? Why?
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

2. If you admire someone, will you help that person grudgingly or willingly? Explain.
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

3. If a team chooses to ignore its coach, might the coach be pleased or angry? Why?
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

4. If someone trudged through the woods, would she move quickly? Why or why not?
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

5. If you are exhausted, what might you do? Why?
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

6. If a bear eats too much, would it face starvation? Why?
   Answer:  
   Explanation:  

B. Word Study. The Latin suffix -ation changes a verb to a noun. It means the condition of being ___ed (past tense verb). Change each underlined verb into a noun by adding -ation. Answer the question using the new word.

1. How might a mother and her child feel if they were to separate in a crowd?
   ________________

2. What do you like to converse about?
   ________________

3. What things do you admire in a person?
   ________________
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Reading: Use Prior Knowledge to Make Predictions

A **prediction** is a logical guess about what will happen next in a story. You can **use your prior knowledge** to help you make predictions. To do this, relate what you already know to the details in a story. For example, you have prior knowledge about stray animals. If you haven’t seen one, you have read about them. You know how they look. You know how they make you feel. Then, as you read details about the abandoned puppy in “Stray,” you are ready to make a **prediction**, a logical guess, about what might happen next.

What if your prediction turns out to be wrong? No problem. Part of the fun of reading is adjusting your predictions as you get more details. As you read, use story clues and your own knowledge to make predictions along the way.

**DIRECTIONS:** You have **prior knowledge** about dogs. You know a lot about how children relate to adults in a family. You have prior knowledge about families that have little money. Start with your prior knowledge. Combine it with a detail from the story. Then, make a prediction on the chart that follows. One entry has been modeled for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prior Knowledge About Strays</th>
<th>Detail From Story</th>
<th>Prediction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They’re hungry.</td>
<td>This one shivers with cold.</td>
<td>Doris will bring it in and feed it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. About dogs

   __________________ + __________________ = __________________

2. About children and adults in a family

   __________________ + __________________ = __________________

3. About families with little money

   __________________ + __________________ = __________________
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**Literary Analysis: Plot**

The **plot** of "Stray" is the arrangement of events in the story. The elements of plot include:

- **Exposition**: introduction of the setting, characters, and basic situation
- **Conflict**: the story's central problem
- **Rising action**: events that increase the tension
- **Climax**: high point of the story when the story's outcome becomes clear
- **Falling action**: events that follow the climax
- **Resolution**: the final outcome

All the events in a plot follow one after another in a logical way. Like most stories, "Stray" centers on a conflict or struggle. You keep reading because you want to find out who will win the conflict or how the problem will be solved. At the climax of the story, you know who wins. The problem is solved. The story ends.

**A. DIRECTIONS:** *The following questions focus on the exposition, the rising action, and the falling action in "Stray." Answer each question in the space provided.*

1. The exposition introduces the setting, characters, and basic situation. Here is one exposition detail:
   
   *Exposition detail: Snow has fallen.*

   What is another exposition detail?

   **Exposition detail:**

2. The events in the rising action come before the climax. There are many events in the rising action of "Stray." Here is one event in the rising action:

   *Rising action event: Doris meets the dog.*

   On the following lines, write two additional events that happen in the rising action.

   **Rising action events:**

   a. 
   
   b. 

3. In "Stray," the story winds up quickly after the climax. Here is one event in the falling action:

   *Falling action event: Mr. Lacey tells Doris he took the dog to the pound.*

   What is another event that happens in the falling action?

   **Falling action event:**
Story Map

Instructions: Fill in the boxes to show how your story developed.

Characters: ____________________________

Setting: ____________________________

Problem: ____________________________

Title: ____________________________

Author: ____________________________

How the Characters Tried to Solve the Problem: ____________________________

Solution: ____________________________