

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## A Letter to the class from Betsy Byars

Dear Class,

When I was growing up, I did not want to be a writer, but I had one thing in common with every writer I know. I loved books.

The whole family knew how much I loved to read, so I got books for my birthday, books for Christmas. At Christmas I would sneak the books out from under the tree, one by one, carefully unwrap them, read them, and stick them back under the tree. I just couldn't wait.

In those days I read for one reason – to find out what was going to happen. Would the black stallion be captured? Would the boys find the pirate's treasure? Did the mummy speak?

I still read a lot, but I read differently now. I want to know what's going to happen, of course, but I also want to find out how the writer made it happen. If a writer makes me feel sad or excited, I read that part again and again until I see how the writer did it. For example, a writer makes a scene move faster by using more dialogue than description. Reading carefully is how I learned how to write.

Whether you read to find out what's going to happen or because you, too, are interested in writing, I hope you've found lots of good books this year. And, yes, I still open anything that looks like a book immediately. I still can't wait.

Happy Reading!

Betsy Byars

1. According to the letter, how has reading parts of books helped Betsy Byars become a better writer?
    - A. It has shown her how other authors create excitement and a fast pace.
    - B. It has given her ideas for books.
    - C. She has met other authors.
    - D. It has shown her that the purpose of writing is to tell what happens.
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## Fire Fighters

Fire fighters are always ready for an emergency. When a house is on fire, fire fighters quickly rush to the scene and rescue any people who may be trapped inside. The fire fighters then put the fire out. Fire fighters also help people who have been in car accidents. Fire fighters use special equipment to free people who are trapped in smashed cars.

Fire fighters may also rescue people who have fallen down holes or wells. Fire fighters conduct fire drills to teach people what to do in case there is a fire.

Not all fires occur in houses and buildings. After weeks of hot, dry weather, fires can suddenly break out in very dry forested areas. These fires can spread rapidly and build into raging, roaring infernos. Fighting a forest fire is quite different from fighting a fire in the city, and the fire fighters have different training.

Fighting forest fires is dangerous and terrifying work. The roar of a fire is as loud as a train rushing past. Burning branches can fall on the fire fighters. A change in the wind can cause the fire to change direction and trap the fire fighters. Many fire fighters have died when a wind change trapped them.

After the fire has been put out, fire fighters often need medical treatment. Smoke gets in the fire fighter's eyes and fills their lungs, making it difficult to breathe. Some fire fighters have burns that need to be dressed. Others need treatment for damaged eyes. Many suffer from exhaustion.

Fire fighters take precautions so that they won't be hurt. They wear suits that are both fireproof and waterproof. They also can wear gas masks to keep them from inhaling smoke.

2. Which dangerous event can happen after a fire breaks out in a dry forest?

- A. The fire spreads rapidly.
  - B. Trees burn very slowly.
  - C. Animals climb trees to escape.
  - D. The fire dies out as soon as it starts.
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3. According to the passage, how do firefighters teach people what to do in case of a fire?

- A. They conduct fire drills.
  - B. They install water hoses.
  - C. They give out pamphlets.
  - D. They show movies on fires.
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4. According to the passage, firefighters can be trapped when

- A. they are in automobile accidents.
  - B. they fall down holes or wells.
  - C. wind causes the fire to change direction.
  - D. burning branches fall on them.
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5. Which trait would BEST describe a fire fighter?

- A. pleasant
  - B. strong
  - C. cautious
  - D. courageous
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6. The FIRST thing fire fighters do at the scene of a fire is to

- A. rescue people.
  - B. put out the fire.
  - C. conduct fire drills.
  - D. use special equipment.
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*Bessie Nickens wrote "Walking the Log: Memories of a Southern Childhood." In this selection, Bessie reflects on her childhood adventures in the nearby woods.*

### **Walking the Log: Memories of a Southern Childhood**

This area was nothing but trees, just hundreds and hundreds of dogwood trees with those beautiful white blossoms. All kinds of pretty flowers would grow out where this creek was. I think it must have been a swamp, because calla lilies would grow there, and blackberries and muscadine. We would walk through these woods, this thick, wooded area, we'd walk through there barefooted. I wouldn't do that now for nothing! And this log had fallen across this creek, and we walked that log. This was fun to us. And of course our little dog Polo would walk the log with us.

We'd roam within a mile or so of our house, just walking in the woods, having fun, catching grasshoppers and butterflies. We just walked all around, climbed trees, picked flowers and fruits. There was muscadine, it looks like a grapevine running up a tree, we'd pick those grapes and eat them. There were also mahoe trees—they had little bitty things that looked like an apple. We'd eat them right off the tree. That water in the creek was clear and beautiful, it wasn't polluted like it is today. You could get down there and drink right out of that creek.

Birds were out there, and squirrels and rabbits. Lots of birds. See the one over there, on the tree? That's a woodpecker. Have you ever seen a woodpecker? Isn't it funny how he can cut that wood with his beak?

I used to sit down in the woods sometimes by myself and just listen to the birds sing and the sounds of the creek. I loved to sit by a creek and just meditate by myself. Have you ever done that? I've done it all my life.

7. Mahoe trees had fruit that looked like little

- A. apples.
  - B. flowers.
  - C. grapes.
  - D. blossoms.
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8. The main purpose of this selection is to
- A. provide information about "walking a log."
  - B. describe the childhood experiences of the author.
  - C. describe several differences between the past and present.
  - D. make suggestions about how to spend time in the woods.
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9. *Muscadine* is a type of

- A. apple.
  - B. flower.
  - C. grape.
  - D. tree.
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10. One contrast the author establishes between now and then is

- A. how large the woods were.
- B. how clean the water was.
- C. the number of plants in the woods.
- D. the number of flowers in the woods.

**Answer Key**

1. A) It has shown her how other authors create excitement and a fast pace.
2. A) The fire spreads rapidly.
3. A) They conduct fire drills.
4. C) wind causes the fire to change direction.
5. D) courageous
6. A) rescue people.
7. A) apples.
8. B) describe the childhood experiences of the author.
9. C) grape.
10. B) how clean the water was.