Frederick Douglass was one of the first fugitive slaves to speak out publicly against slavery. On the morning of August 12, 1841, he stood up at an anti-slavery meeting on Nantucket Island. With great power and eloquence, he described his life in bondage. As soon as he finished, the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison asked the audience, "Have we been listening to a thing, a piece of property, or to a man?" "A man! A man!" five hundred voices replied. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the pioneering feminist, vividly recalled her first glimpse of Douglass on an abolitionist platform: "He stood there like an African prince, majestic in his wrath, as with wit, satire, and indignation he graphically described the bitterness of slavery and the humiliation of subjection."

Douglass (who was originally named Frederick Bailey, after a Muslim ancestor, Belali Mohomet) had personally experienced many of slavery’s worst horrors. Born in 1818, the son of a Maryland slave woman and an unknown white father, he was separated from his mother almost immediately after his birth and remembered seeing her only four or five times before her death. Cared for by his maternal grandmother, an enslaved midwife, he suffered a cruel emotional blow when, at the age of six, he was taken from his home to work on one of the largest plantations on Maryland’s eastern shore. There, Douglass suffered chronic hunger and witnessed many of the cruelties that he later recorded in his autobiographies. He saw an aunt receive forty lashes and a cousin bleeding from her shoulders and neck after a flogging by a drunken overseer.

Douglass was temporarily rescued from a life of menial plantation labor when he was sent to Baltimore to work for a shipwright. There, his mistress taught him to read until her husband declared that "learning would spoil" him. Douglass continued his education on his own. With fifty cents that he earned blacking boots, Douglass bought a copy of the *Columbian Orator*, a collection of speeches that included a blistering attack on slavery. This book introduced him to the ideals of the Enlightenment and the American Revolution and inspired him to perfect his oratorical skills.

At fifteen, following his master’s death, Douglass was returned to plantation life. He was unwilling to show deference to his new owner, whom he refused to call "Master." To crush Douglass’s rebellious spirit, he was hired out to a notorious "slave breaker" named Edward Covey. For seven months,
Douglass endured abuse and beatings. But one hot August morning he could take no more. He fought back and defeated Covey in a fist fight. Covey never mistreated Douglass again.

In 1836, Douglass and two close friends plotted to escape slavery. When the plan was uncovered, Douglass was thrown into jail. Instead of being sold to slave traders and shipped to the deep South, as he had expected, Douglass was returned to Baltimore and promised freedom at the age of 25 if he behaved himself.

In Baltimore, Douglass worked in the city's shipyards. Virtually every day, white workers harassed him and on one occasion beat him with bricks and metal spikes. Eventually, Douglass's owner gave him the unusual privilege of hiring himself out for wages and living independently. It was during this period of relative freedom that Douglass met Anna Murray, a free black woman whom he later married.

In 1838, after his owner threatened to take away his right to hire out his own time and keep a portion of his wages, Douglass decided to run away. With papers borrowed from a free black sailor, he boarded a train and rode to freedom. To conceal his identity, he adopted a new last name, Douglass, chosen from Sir Walter Scott's poem, "Lady of the Lake."

He settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts, where he worked in the shipyards, and began to participate in anti-slavery meetings. As a traveling lecturer, Douglass electrified audiences with his first-hand accounts of slavery. When many northerners refused to believe that this eloquent orator could possibly have been a slave, he responded by writing an autobiography that identified his previous owners by name. Fearful that his autobiography made him vulnerable to kidnapping and a return to slavery, Douglass fled to England. Only after British abolitionists purchased his freedom 1846 did he return to the United States.

Initially, Douglass supported William Lloyd Garrison and other radical abolitionists, who believed that moral purity was more important than political success. Douglass later broke with Garrison, started his own newspaper, The North Star, and supported political action against slavery. He was an early supporter of the Republican Party, even though its goal was to halt slavery's expansion, not to abolish the institution. Following the Civil War, the party rewarded his loyalty by appointing him marshal and register of deeds for the District of Columbia and then US minister to Haiti.

Douglass supported many reforms including temperance and women's rights. He was one of the few men to attend the first women's rights convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, and he was the only man to vote for a resolution demanding the vote for women. His main cause, however, was the struggle against slavery and racial discrimination. In the 1840s and 1850s, he not only lectured tirelessly against slavery, he also raised funds to help fugitive slaves reach safety in Canada. During the Civil War, he lobbied President Lincoln to make slave emancipation a war aim and to organize black regiments. Declaring that "liberty won by white men would lack half its lustre," he personally recruited some 2,000 African American troops for the Union Army. Among the recruits were two of his sons, who took part in the bloody Union assault on Fort Wagner in South Carolina in July 1863, which resulted in more than 1,500 Northern casualties—but which proved black troops' heroism in battle.

Douglass never wavered in his commitment to equal rights. During Reconstruction, he struggled to convince Congress to use federal power to safeguard the freedmen's rights. Later, as the country retreated from Reconstruction, Douglass passionately denounced lynching, segregation, and disfranchisement. Toward the end of his career, he was asked what advice he had for a young man.
"Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!" he replied. Despite old age, Douglass never stopped agitating. He died in 1895, at the age of 77, after attending a women's rights meeting with Susan B. Anthony.

It is a striking historical coincidence that the year of Douglass's death brought a new black leader to national prominence. Seven months after Douglass died, Booker T. Washington, the founder of the Tuskegee Institute, delivered a speech in Atlanta, Georgia, that catapulted him into the public spotlight. The "Atlanta Compromise" speech called on African Americans to end their demands for equal rights and strive instead for economic advancement. "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the finger," Washington declared, "yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Washington's philosophy of "accommodation" with segregation represented the polar opposite of Douglass's goal of full civil and political equality. It would be more than half a century before civil rights activism began to transform Douglass’s ideal of social equality into a reality.

Steven Mintz, a historian at Columbia University and director of the Columbia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Teaching Center, would like to express his profound debt to John Stauffer of Harvard University for sharing his many insights into the novel. Mintz is author of Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood; Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life, and Moralists & Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War Reformers.
Satchel Paige was pitching in the Negro Leagues in California when he got the news he had been anticipating for two decades. Brooklyn Dodgers president Branch Rickey had just signed a Negro to a big-league contract—the first Negro in modern times. Word tore through America's clubhouses and grandstands that October afternoon in 1945: a black man was going to be in the minors, then the Major Leagues. Jackie Robinson would topple baseball's color bar. And Leroy "Satchel" Paige would not.

Earthshaking—almost like the emancipation of the slaves, integration supporters proclaimed. It was fitting "that the end of baseball's Jim Crow law should follow the conclusion of a great war to preserve liberty, equality and decency," wrote Lee Dunbar of the Oakland Tribune. A desecration of the natural order, segregationists shot back. "We live happier with segregation in athletics as well as all other activities," argued Bud Seifert of South Carolina's Spartanburg Journal. Bob Feller, the Cleveland Indians flamethrower with a golden arm and a tin ear, told reporters that if Jackie "were a white man, I doubt if they would consider him as big league material."

The public listened to the cacophony of voices, but the one it wanted to hear most of all was Satchel's. What did America's best-loved black ballplayer—the man everyone had assumed would be first-make of the Dodgers' historic move? "They didn't make a mistake by signing Robinson," Satchel said. "They couldn't have picked a better man." The words ate at him even as he uttered them. Not only was he being bumped, he was being bumped by his Negro Leagues teammate, an untested rookie who could not hit a curve, gun a throw to first, or land the job as the Kansas City Monarchs' second baseman until an injury forced out the incumbent.

Other seasoned Negro Leaguers were resentful that the young slugger had never served his time in the sandlots and barnyards, eating dust and fending off slurs. Robinson had not proven himself against the best white ballplayers the way Satchel would do again that next night in San Diego against Feller's All-Stars from the all-white majors. Rather than show deference to the old hands who had proven themselves, Jackie showed disdain. He complained about the seedy hotels. He objected to puny paychecks and uneven umpiring.

Satchel tried to be philosophical. He understood that he was aging and old-school, while the twenty-six-year-old Robinson was a college boy and Army veteran who Rickey felt could bear the ruthless scrutiny of being first. Jackie did not balk at Rickey's plan to start him in the minors, in faraway Montreal. Satchel never could have abided the affront. Jackie had the table manners whites liked; Satchel was rough-hewn and ungovernable. Satchel realized he was a specter from the past rather than the harbinger of the more racially tolerant future the Dodgers wanted.

Still, it hurt. It was Paige who had proved during two decades of barnstorming across America and pitching in the shadow world of the Negro Leagues that white fans along with black would come to see great black ballplayers, and that proof was what pushed Rickey to rip down baseball's racial barricades. Satchel threw
so hard that his catchers tried to soften the sting by cushioning their gloves with beefsteaks, and had control so precise that he used a hardball to knock lit cigarettes out of the mouths of obliging teammates. Satchel was so dominating—especially when his teams were beating the best of the white big leaguers—that even good ol' boys like Dizzy Dean could not help but be impressed. Major League owners noticed, too. One of them-flamboyant Bill Veeck of the Cleveland Indians—said he tried to sign Paige and other blacks in 1944, a year before Rickey's deal with Robinson, but was blocked by the baseball commissioner. It was Satchel who brought this spotlight to the Negro Leagues, the amazing Kansas City Monarchs, and their first-year second-baseman Jackie Robinson.

Paige was savvy enough to know that Americans have room for just one hero at a time. If Jackie became the knight who slew Jim Crow, the roles of the real pioneers would be lost. Satchel felt sorry for all the great black ballplayers of the segregated era—from Fleetwood Walker and Rube Foster to Josh Gibson, the black Babe Ruth—and sorrier still for himself. He worried that he would be remembered as a Stepin Fetchit or worse, an Uncle Tom. Satchel never saw himself going to war over every racial slight, but he had stood up. He refused to play in a town unless it supplied lodging and food to him and his teammates, a defiance for which young civil rights workers would get arrested and lionized a generation later. Only a player of his stature and grace could manage that without getting his skull cracked open. It was painful, after all those years of hearing "if only you were white," to be told now "if only you were younger."

"I'd been the guy who'd started all that big talk about letting us in the big time," Satchel wrote in his memoir. "I'd been the one who everybody'd said should be in the majors." To be denied that chance hurt as badly as "when somebody you love dies or something dies inside you."

When the pain ran that deep only one person could ease it: his girlfriend and confidante, Lahoma Brown. So cherished was her advice that Satchel recalled it word-for-word seventeen years afterward, when she'd become his wife and mother to his seven children. "They took that kid off our team and didn't even look at me," Satchel told her. "He's young, Satchel," Lahoma answered. "Maybe that's why." "He's no Satchel Paige." "Everybody knows that, Satchel... if they let one colored player into their leagues, they'll be letting others. Maybe the major leaguers'll come to you." "They'll have to come real pretty-like. They've been puttin' me off too long to just wiggle their fingers at me now." "Don't you go sounding like you're sour. When they come for you, you know you'll go. You've been wanting it real bad for too long not to." "Well, it still was me that ought to have been first."

The sense of having been wronged never left him. Satchel Paige had etched his legend as a ballplayer and performer, but he was right about the public's memory: when it comes to integrating baseball there is only one name that today's children or even their grandparents know—Jackie Robinson. Satchel Paige had been hitting away at Jim Crow decades before the world got to know Jackie Robinson, laying the groundwork for him the way A. Philip Randolph, W. E. B. Du Bois, and other early civil rights leaders did for Martin Luther King Jr. Paige was as much a poster boy for black baseball as Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong was for black music and Paul Robeson was for the black stage—and much as those two became symbols of their art in addition to their race, so Satchel was known not as a great black pitcher but a great pitcher. Satchel Paige led blackball to the promised land of big-time baseball. He opened the national pastime to blacks and forever changed his sport and this nation.

Larry Tye, a former reporter at the *Boston Globe*, is author of five books, including *Satchel: The Life and Times of an American Legend* (www.larrytye.com)
Use the article "Frederick Douglass: From Slavery to Freedom" to answer questions 1 to 3.

1. What was Frederick Douglass' main cause after he returned to the United States from England?

2. What did Frederick Douglass do to fight for his main cause? Cite at least three details from the text about Frederick Douglass's actions to support your answer.

3. What impact did Frederick Douglass have on the fight for African American rights? Use details from the text to support your answer.
Use the article "Before Jackie: How Strikeout King Satchel Paige Struck Down Jim Crow" to answer questions 4 to 6.

4. During two decades of pitching in the Negro Leagues, what did Satchel Paige prove about baseball fans?

5. How did Satchel Paige "lay the groundwork" for Jackie Robinson to become the first black Major League Baseball player? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

6. Why was Satchel Paige important to the fight for social equality for African Americans? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.
Use the articles "Frederick Douglass: From Slavery to Freedom" and "Before Jackie: How Strikeout King Satchel Paige Struck Down Jim Crow" to answer questions 7 to 8.

7. Compare the impact that Frederick Douglass and Satchel Paige each had on African Americans' rights. Use evidence from both texts to support your comparison.

8. Contrast the ways that Frederick Douglass and Satchel Paige helped to achieve positive changes for African Americans. Use evidence from both texts to support your answer.
1. Who was Satchel Paige?
   A. the first black baseball player in the Major Leagues
   B. a pitcher for the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team
   C. a talented baseball pitcher in the Negro Leagues in California
   D. a major civil rights activist in the 1940s

2. What does the author describe throughout most of the text?
   A. the reasons why Jackie Robinson was signed to the Major Leagues, rather than Satchel Paige
   B. the way Satchel Paige felt about not being the first black baseball player in the Major Leagues
   C. the significance of the integration of Major League baseball to the civil rights movement
   D. the personal relationship between Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson

3. Read this statement.

   Major League team owners were worried about how white baseball fans would react to a black baseball player joining their league.

What evidence from the text supports this statement?

   A. "Jackie did not balk at Rickey's plan to start him in the minors, in faraway Montreal. Satchel never could have abided the affront."
   B. "It was Paige who had proved [...] that white fans along with black would come to see great black ballplayers, and that proof was what pushed Rickey to rip down baseball's racial barricades."
   C. "[Paige] refused to play in a town unless it supplied lodging and food to him and his teammates, a defiance for which young civil rights workers would get arrested and lionized a generation later."
   D. "Satchel realized he was a specter from the past rather than the harbinger of the more racially tolerant future the Dodgers wanted."
4. What was a main reason why Satchel Paige felt that he should have been the first black baseball player in the Major League, instead of Jackie Robinson?

A. He was older than Jackie Robinson, and therefore could better handle being the first black Major League baseball player.

B. He was a better baseball player than Jackie Robinson, and had proven himself against the best white players.

C. He cared about civil rights issues and racial tolerance much more than Jackie Robinson did.

D. He was already prepared to be the first black Major League player because the Cleveland Indians had tried to sign him.

5. What is the main idea of this text?

A. Branch Rickey chose to sign Jackie Robinson to his Major League baseball team rather than Satchel Paige because Jackie was a stronger player and a more likeable person.

B. Satchel Paige was such a talented pitcher that his catchers had to cushion their gloves in order to handle his pitches.

C. Although Jackie Robinson was the first black baseball player in the Major League, most other black baseball players were resentful of his success.

D. Satchel Paige was a talented black baseball pitcher who laid the groundwork for Major League baseball to include black players like Jackie Robinson.

6. Read this quote from the text.

"'I'd been the guy who'd started all that big talk about letting us in the big time,' Satchel wrote in his memoir. 'I'd been the one who everybody'd said should be in the majors.' To be denied that chance hurt as badly as 'when somebody you love dies or something dies inside you.'"

Why might the author have included this quote from Satchel Paige's memoir?

A. to encourage the reader to read Satchel Paige's memoir

B. to prove that Satchel Paige would have been a better Major League player than Jackie Robinson

C. to indicate that somebody Satchel Paige loved had died very recently

D. to show how strongly Satchel Paige felt about not being chosen to play in the majors
7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

Jackie Robinson was the first black baseball player signed from the Negro Leagues to the Major Leagues, _____ it was Satchel Paige who brought the spotlight to the Negro Leagues.

A. even though  
B. because  
C. before  
D. for instance

8. How did Satchel Paige help bring the spotlight of Major League team owners' attention to the Negro Leagues?

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

9. Why did Branch Rickey, president of the Dodgers, most likely choose to sign Jackie Robinson? Give at least two details from the text to support your answer.

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________
10. Did the Dodgers make a mistake by choosing Jackie Robinson over Satchel Paige to be their first black baseball player? Use evidence from the text to support your argument.
I Don't Like Ron Gonzales
by ReadWorks

Ron Gonzales and I didn't like each other from the moment we met. Here's how it went down. After working three and a half years in the subway on a station cleanup crew, I was done with garbage and the rats. So when I heard the Metropolitan Transit Authority was hiring a batch of new train operators, I was pretty excited. If I made it, my pay would triple to $35 an hour. I could stop coming home smelling like trash. Plus, as an operator, I could close the swinging door to the operator's booth at the front of the train. That meant heat in the winter, air conditioning all summer, a shiny piece of stainless steel separating me from the city's smells, and its angers, and all the restless people.

So I applied and somehow got accepted. On the first day of May, I showed up at the MTA's training building in Gravesend, Brooklyn. I knew I was cutting it close. I was running down a carpeted hallway to the classroom with like zero seconds to spare when I ran into this guy. I'm serious—we totally ran into each other. And this man, after we bounced off each other, was looking me up and down. Not too subtle about it, either. His eyes narrowed, his nose even scrunched, and I could tell what he was thinking: "This guy is a loser."

I was wearing my standard uniform: hair tied into tight cornrows with little white beads. Saggy jeans. Tattoos all over.

This kind of thing does not happen. See, I'm a big guy-six-foot-four, some muscles, used to play football in high school. When I'm walking down the street, most people avoid looking me straight in the eye, especially little guys like Ron Gonzales.

I'm not going to lie, I was thinking some pretty rude things right back at him. He had on these thick glasses, a green Polo shirt, khaki pants, his hair slicked back, carrying a heavy backpack. Plus, he was a good five inches shorter than me. So I stood there thinking, "This guy is a total nerd. And he's looking me in the eye?"

I got real mad, real quick. I was about to say something clean-cut, but all-business, something like, "What are you lookin' at, son?" Then I remembered the teacher and the whole classroom full of people, looking right at us.

I froze. Ron Gonzales didn't. He gave me a little nod, passed in front of me, and walked right into the classroom. Left me holding the door like some kind of butler! I was all confused and angry. Did that little dude just punk me? Or was he caught off-guard just like me? Either way, I looked right at him, and he held his ground. That was weird. I tried my best to wipe the anger off my face. I walked into the classroom real slow and took a seat right behind Ron Gonzales. Is that how you want to play, little man? That's fine. Let's play.

People in my neighborhood ask me if being a subway operator is easy. I say it is, and it isn't. They think I'm messing with them, but it's the truth. On most days, there's nothing to it. After the conductor closes the door, I reach down, take this little wheel in my hand and spin it to the right, like a clock. This gets the train moving forward. When the front of the train noses into the next station, I start spinning the wheel back the other way to cut the power, and then pull the brake lever back toward me. Simple.
Almost anyone can drive a train, but it takes practice to do it well. The wheel is small and heavy, and it only wants to make a quarter-turn at a time. Next time you're on a train that bucks a lot as it stops, you know a rookie's at the wheel. Stopping is also complicated by tunnel vision. Unlike in a car, where your peripheral vision helps you feel how fast you're going and how much space lies ahead of you, in a tunnel you can only see straight ahead.

That's why the MTA teaches operators that, instead of driving just by the feel of it, we also drive by the math. From the first day of training, they started drilling a bunch of equations into our heads. Let's say your train is 10 cars long, packed full of people like green beans in a can, and you're going 35 miles an hour, a pretty good speed for underground. It could take you 300 feet to stop. Cut any of those factors in half-speed, the train's length and weight—and you may stop 10 feet sooner. That doesn't sound like a lot. But when you're driving a train that is almost exactly as long as each station, nailing that stopping time is hard to do, but it's very important.

Right from the start, I was good with the wheel. That little twerp Ron Gonzales kept whining about how hard it was to gauge distances in the tunnel, but I just picked it right up. What I couldn't handle was the math. How was I supposed to run all those calculations in my head while I looked out the window, worked the wheel, watched the speed dial, pulled the brake lever, and listened to the radio?

The training center had its own line of track out back. The train we used had about 10 cameras in the cockpit aimed out the windows and down at the controls. As one student went outside to drive the train, the teacher and the rest of the class sat inside the classroom and watched the trainee's movements on a wall of video screens.

When I drove, I never heard a peep from the teacher until I was about to stop. Driving by feel works well at speed, but as you're slowing down you need to have those calculations already in your head. So I kept bungling the endings. Either I stopped five feet short of the mark, or I'd finish with so many jerks and starts that anyone standing on the train would have been lying on the floor by the time I was done.

"You're smooth as glass from takeoff to full-speed, Aikin," said the teacher, an old guy named Mr. McCarthy who'd been driving trains for three decades and was six months shy of retirement. "But you stop like an epileptic seizure."

Next we watched Ron Gonzales take out his first train. I swear he barely looked at the controls. On the monitors it looked like he was staring out into space. His first time at the wheel, and this guy was driving entirely by math. I was amazed. So was Mr. McCarthy, who sat there with his chin in his lap.

"I don't think I've ever seen that," the teacher said. "A natural-born math driver, huh?"

But then Gonzales had to stop, and the problems began. He spun the wheel and pulled the brake lever in the wrong directions. McCarthy reached for the big red button on the wall of the classroom to cut all power to the train. Finally Gonzales figured out his mistake. He cut the wheel hard to the left and yanked the brake, and the train stopped with a screech we could hear inside the building. Ten feet farther and Gonzales would have driven the whole thing right off the test track and into the gravel.

When Gonzales came inside, I made sure I was right by the door.

"Nice driving, chump," I said.
"What did you-" said Gonzales, before the teacher interrupted him.

"I swear to God, if either one of you drives my train off the track, I'll kick you back down to roach patrol so fast your head will spin," McCarthy said. "Between the two of you, you've got the brain of one great operator. On your own, you're both pretty pathetic."

So Gonzales came from a cleaning unit, too, I thought. I've got a pretty good poker face, so when McCarthy laid into us, I didn't show how scared I was of losing this job. But Gonzales wasn't so good at self-control. He looked terrified. Good, I thought. Let the little dude squirm.

With practice, I slowly figured out how to do the math in my head while operating the controls. It helped to tune out unnecessary details, like radio calls about tracks I wasn't on or whether the air conditioning was running.

Still, McCarthy seemed to have it in for Gonzales and me. So on my first day of driving a real train on a real track with real, living passengers, I was paired with Ron Gonzales. I breathed pretty heavily and started to complain, but McCarthy just looked up at me all wide-eyed.

"If you guys got a problem with that, I'm sure I can find a cleanup crew that needs two young bucks like yourselves," McCarthy said.

I swallowed hard and popped my knuckles, but said nothing. Two hours later, I was driving a downtown local 3 train, standing next to Ron Gonzales. We were pulling up to 96 Street, 50 feet below the apartment buildings of millionaires on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, when some passenger pulled the fire alarm. The train's emergency system cut the engines and pulled the brakes until we stopped.

"Prank?" Ron Gonzales asked.

I shrugged. Then we smelled the smoke. The fire was close to the front of the train and it was pretty big. Outside the control booth, the air in the tunnel grew dark with smoke.

Gonzales and I reached through for the telephone. I still had a better sense of the booth's layout than he did, so I found it first, lifted the receiver, and made the announcement we'd practiced in training.

"There is an emergency on the train. Please remain calm. Please walk to the nearest exit. Do not run. I repeat. Please walk to the nearest exit."

Then I did something stupid. I opened the control booth door. I thought I could help-figure out where the fire was, calm people down, help them escape.

Gonzales did a better job remembering our training. He tried to block the door, but I was already past him.

"Don't! They told us not to!" he said.

Immediately I saw the fire was in the rear of the first car. A burned-out brake pad? A malfunctioning engine? Whatever the cause, opening the door delivered a rush of air right to the fire. The flames leapt from the floor, and a wall of black smoke hit me in the face. I fell to the ground, started coughing and couldn't stop. I couldn't catch my breath. I got dizzy fast, spun around, and tried crawling for what
I hoped was the control room.

Then, I felt an arm weave itself under my armpit and lift me to my feet. My rescuer's face was right next to mine, but I couldn't see who it was in the black smoke. We stumbled forward to the control room. The man held me up with his right arm and used his left to punch out the front window. After three bashes, the glass broke. Our exit from the train was a climbing, stumbling fall to the tracks.

My rescuer lay beside me, hacking. I reached down and copied his move, looping my arm under his and hoisting him up.

"We can't stay here," I said.

We stumbled down the track. Finally we saw a white tunnel through the smoke. It was a regular tunnel lamp. About 50 yards away, we saw the red light of an exit sign in the distance. It looked like a bunch of passengers from the train had already gotten there. I smiled and looked over.

That's when I saw that the man who rescued me was Ron Gonzales. I was so surprised, I stopped walking.

"Come on, you big dummy. I'm not letting you die," Ron said and smiled. He lifted me up and walked. When he grew tired, I moved my shoulder under his and pulled him along.

Finally we reached the steel exit door. Actually, I got there first. I opened it. "After you," I said.

"No," said Ron Gonzales. "After you."
See If I Care
by ReadWorks

As I reflect in my old age on my accomplishments and disappointments, my triumphs and regrets, I wonder if I distort the truth to ascribe a certain, shall we say, significance to events. Is it wrong to interpret events symbolically? Perhaps I have read too many books. Perhaps I long to assign order and meaning to what is mere randomness, mere chance.

And yet (call me old-fashioned if you'd like) a life without meaning strikes me as unacceptable, even impossible, because to me it seems the more things change, the more they stay the same. I consider chaos, chance, and randomness nothing more than the newest attempts to explain this inexplicable life.

Of course I am thinking of my career, my meteoric rise to editor-in-chief and my ruination, which at the time seemed wholly without cause or explanation. Even then, it is true, I considered Grady Maxwell my story's villain. But I did not hate the man. I almost rather pitied him. No longer. He has grown in my mind over the years, and so too has his importance to my story. Maxwell's very brilliance blinded me to the traps he laid, and I fell into them, helpless.

But I do not like to dwell on evil. I occupy my days with my hobbies. I have a wonderful collection of butterflies, the joy of my life, including the astonishingly rare Greta oto, the glass winged butterfly, which I captured in the marshlands of southern Mexico. I never married, and so I have been spared the grotesque decay of love. I sit on my back porch as evening arrives, the mockingbirds calling from within the hawthorns I planted with my own hands, the deep blue of the Northern California sky bruising into purple, and when finally it blackens, I finish the last of my lemonade and rise and head upstairs to bed. No husband to nag me. No children to ignore me, condescend to me, and send me to a home. Had I married I would probably still be in Albany, New York, that horrid city, buried under three feet of snow.

In all fairness, I liked it well enough when I ran the newspaper. Albany is no New York City, and not exactly Chicago or Boston or Los Angeles or-well, I could go on. But it is the capital of the most powerful state of the most powerful country in the world, famed for its outsized ambitions and its cloak and dagger politics. And who guards against the corruption and the back-door dealings? The press, of course. The newspaper. And who watches over the paper? The editor-in-chief. That was me.

I was lavished upon. Expensive dinners, invitations to the best parties, high society, under-the-table gifts of all sorts—there seemed no end to the citizenry's gratitude. And though I accepted—it would have been rude to do otherwise—never once did I allow this tribute to affect my judgment, nor the clarity of my vision, nor the tenacity with which I pursued the corrupt. I gave thanks, and then I returned to the boardroom with justice in my heart and the glint of the righteous in my eye.

I had plenty of enemies. But I knew who my enemies were, and according to the old saying, I kept them closer than my own friends. I always sat with my back to the wall, so to speak. That is why the Maxwell business haunts me still, because all my precautions came to naught. Though I was conspired against, it was I myself who blundered headfirst to ruin.

In one of fate's strange coincidences, Maxwell joined the staff the same week I was promoted to
editor-in-chief. (His hiring process had already been handled; I had nothing to do with it.) I worked those first few months at a feverish pitch and hardly noticed Maxwell. He was after all only one of many reporters working the local political beat.

How vividly I can even now recall the day he marched into my office in his ratty tweed jacket and without a word threw onto my desk that plain, unlabeled manila folder and looked at me with just the slightest hint of a smile—how devious that smile!—that played about his mouth and especially his eyes (never trust a smile in the eyes) as he planted himself before my desk, arms crossed, waiting for me to speak first.

"Maxwell, is it?" I asked without shifting in my chair. He huffed. "Take a look," he replied in that gravelly baritone of his, and he nodded at the folder on my desk. I picked it up, opened it, and inspected the contents in their entirety. It took all my restraint to mask my surprise. I've always prided myself on maintaining the composure proper to the editor of a major paper. But what I saw was frankly shocking. In the folder were six photos that appeared to show Waylon Thatch, Albany's then-mayor and a close friend of mine, in what we in the business call a compromising position. The photos seemed to all have been taken around the same time, and judging by the mayor's appearance, it couldn't have been long ago. In them, Waylon was with one of the suspected crime leaders in our area, exchanging a mysterious package. It was suspicious, to say the least. I asked Maxwell where he had gotten the photos. He said it came from a contact of a contact, who claimed to be part of a local cult. He claimed the secret society was composed of the city's elite. Perhaps his contact had an axe to grind with the mayor, who knew?

What a fool I was. I chased that scandal doggedly, with everything I had. I was young and brash. I envisioned a career-defining story, an editorship with the New York Times, a nightly show on CNN. I was blinded to the obvious. The photos, of course, were fakes, brilliantly edited fakes. And though I've never been able to prove it, I am ironclad in my conviction that Grady Maxwell was not just another overeager reporter swept up in the ruse. He was in on it. He may even have been its principal architect.

Who but Maxwell emerged from the scandal unscathed? When the dust had settled, when the guillotine's echoes had faded and the rolling heads, mine chief among them, had ceased to roll, who still had a job? Maxwell.

Albany politics were a very shady affair. Someone had an axe to grind with me, that much now is clear. I had no idea how deep the corruption ran, and I still don't. I never will.

I am content merely to pass the rest of my days in quietude, sheltered from people and ignorant of politics. Let the country sink in its own mire, see if I care. Let the Grady Maxwells of the world scrabble tooth and claw for a seat at the feet of the mighty. See if I care.
Use the article "I Don't Like Ron Gonzales" to answer questions 1 to 2.

1. To whom does the narrator compare himself throughout the story?

2. Read this paragraph from the story, describing the first time the narrator met Ron Gonzales.

"I froze. Ron Gonzales didn't. He gave me a little nod, passed in front of me, and walked right into the classroom. Left me holding the door like some kind of butler! I was all confused and angry. Did that little dude just punk me? Or was he caught off-guard just like me? Either way, I looked right at him, and he held his ground. That was weird. I tried my best to wipe the anger off my face. I walked into the classroom real slow and took a seat right behind Ron Gonzales. Is that how you want to play, little man? That's fine. Let's play."

What do the last three sentences of this paragraph reveal about how the narrator felt when he first met Ron Gonzalez?
Use the article "See If I Care" to answer questions 3 to 4.

3. Whom does the narrator view as the villain in the story of the scandal that ended his or her career?

4. Read the last paragraph of the story:

"I am content merely to pass the rest of my days in quietude, sheltered from people and ignorant of politics. Let the country sink in its own mire, see if I care. Let the Grady Maxwells of the world scrabble tooth and claw for a seat at the feet of the mighty. See if I care."

Based on the repetition of the phrase "see if I care," how does the narrator feel about the scandal that ended his or her career?
Use the articles "I Don't Like Ron Gonzales" and "See If I Care" to answer questions 5 to 6.

5. What is one similarity between the experiences of the two stories' narrators? Use details from both texts to support your answer.

6. The statements narrators make can reveal their thoughts or feelings about experiences they have had. Use evidence from both texts to argue for or against this statement.
1. What was the narrator's job before he was hired as a train operator?
   A. a bus driver
   B. a station announcer
   C. a member of a station cleanup crew
   D. a train operation instructor

2. How do the narrator's feelings for Ron Gonzales change as the story progresses?
   A. At the beginning of the story, he feels indifferent about Ron Gonzales. By the end of the story, he hates Ron Gonzales.
   B. At the beginning of the story, he likes Ron Gonzales. By the end of the story, he hates Ron Gonzales.
   C. At the beginning of the story, he dislikes Ron Gonzales. By the end of the story, he develops respect for Ron Gonzales.
   D. At the beginning of the story, he hates Ron Gonzales. By the end of the story, he feels indifferent about Ron Gonzales.

3. To safely drive a train, operators need to use both feel and mathematic equations at the same time.
   What can be concluded from this information?
   A. Operating trains is simple.
   B. Only naturally gifted drivers can ever learn to operate trains.
   C. Operating a train requires both practice and concentration.
   D. Operating trains is safe.

4. Read the following sentences from the passage: "Did that little dude just punk me? Or was he caught off-guard just like me? Either way, I looked right at him, and he held his ground. That was weird."
   Based on the on the evidence in the passage, how was the narrator feeling?
   A. confused
   B. angry
   C. sad
   D. disappointed
5. What is the main theme of this passage?
   A. Operating trains is very difficult.
   B. Having friends is important when learning a new skill.
   C. People who do not like each other at first can end up liking each other.
   D. People who do not like each other at first can never become friends.

6. Read the following sentences from the passage: "Almost anyone can drive a train, but it takes practice to do it well. The wheel is small and heavy, and it only wants to make a quarter-turn at a time. Next time on a train that bucks a lot as it stops, you know a rookie's at the wheel."

   As used in the passage, what does the word "rookie" mean?
   A. a driver who does not have enough experience to operate the train perfectly
   B. a very skilled train operator
   C. a driver who enjoys making passengers fall over
   D. a driver with a faulty train

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

   The narrator is naturally good with the wheel used to operate the train, ________ he is not comfortable driving by math right away.
   A. specifically
   B. but
   C. finally
   D. previously

8. Using information from the text, describe the physical differences between the narrator and Ron Gonzales.
9. Explain why the narrator is so surprised when Ron Gonzales holds his ground and looks him in the eye after they run into each other. Use information from the text.


10. The narrator and Ron Gonzales first meet when they run into each other before their first train operating class. Why is it so important that the narrator and Ron Gonzales both say "After you" at the end of the story? Use information from the passage to support your answer.


ReadWorks.org · © 2020 ReadWorks®, Inc. All rights reserved.
1. What was the narrator's former job in Albany?
   A. politician
   B. TV reporter
   C. newspaper editor-in-chief
   D. photojournalist

2. What situation has the narrator struggled through?
   A. losing her job in a political scandal
   B. doing a job that she hates
   C. divorcing her husband
   D. being unable to have kids

3. The narrator believed that an article about the scandalous photos of the mayor would improve her career. What evidence from the story best supports this conclusion?
   A. "I was blinded to the obvious. The photos, of course, were fakes, brilliantly edited fakes."
   B. "I envisioned a career-defining story, an editorship with the New York Times, a nightly show on CNN."
   C. "What a fool I was. I chased that scandal doggedly, with everything I had. I was young and brash."
   D. "Albany politics were a very shady affair. Someone had an axe to grind with me, that much now is clear."

4. Read the following sentences: "Let the country sink in its own mire, see if I care. Let the Grady Maxwells of the world scramble tooth and claw for a seat at the feet of the mighty. See if I care."

Based on the repeated phrase, "see if I care," what conclusion can you make about the narrator?
   A. The narrator no longer cares about power and politics.
   B. The narrator does not have strong feelings about Grady Maxwell.
   C. The narrator is not upset that Grady Maxwell stole her job.
   D. The narrator is trying to hide the fact that she actually cares.
5. What is this story mostly about?

A. the cloak-and-dagger politics of Albany and its corrupt politicians
B. how the press guards against political corruption and bribery
C. the editor-in-chief of a newspaper who lost her job in a scandal
D. the career of Grady Maxwell and how he became editor-in-chief

6. Read the following sentences: "I was lavished upon. Expensive dinners, invitations to the best parties, high society, under-the-table gifts of all sorts—there seemed no end to the citizenry's gratitude. And though I accepted—it would have been rude to do otherwise—never once did I allow this tribute to affect my judgment, nor the clarity of my vision, nor the tenacity with which I pursued the corrupt."

As used in this sentence, what does the phrase "lavished upon" most nearly mean?

A. Someone spends lots of money on you and praises you.
B. You allow someone to give you money or gifts in exchange for a favor.
C. You spend a lot of money to buy yourself nice things.
D. You become greedy and corrupt after receiving many gifts.

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The narrator believes that Maxwell was part of the scandal that made her lose her job; __________, she has not been able to prove Maxwell's guilt.

A. therefore
B. however
C. obviously
D. for example

8. Who does the narrator blame for the loss of her job as editor-in-chief?
9. How does the narrator's view of Maxwell change over time?

10. "[Grady Maxwell] has grown in my mind over the years, and so too has his importance to my story."

Based on this information, what can you conclude about how the narrator has spent her time over the years? Does it seem like the narrator let go of her bitterness about losing her job? Support your answer using information from the passage.