Name: _____ Date: _____

The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Circle group

On the balcony of apartment 4B sat a clay flowerpot. In the pot grew a thick cushion of green moss. In the moss, hidden from every giant, lived the Mossfolk astronomers. Their observatory was a hollow acorn cap. A thimble-sized telescope pointed at the sky.

Every few days something strange happened. A great silver comet roared across the sky. A rain of water fell after it. The astronomers wrote it in their star charts, but they could never tell when it would come. Chief Astronomer Wren worried the comet would smash their moss valley.

Ida lived in 4B. She saw the tiny telescope while she pulled weeds. She knelt down and squinted. Wren stood on the rim of the acorn cap and waved a flag.

"Please warn us about the comet!" Wren called in a thin, whistle voice.

Ida laughed softly. "That is not a comet," she said. "It is my watering can."

The astronomers went quiet. Then they began to cheer. Ida watered the plants every Tuesday and Friday. So the comet was not wild. It was dependable. Wren crossed out the old charts. She wrote a new schedule with Tuesday and Friday circled in blue ink.

After that the Mossfolk set out their buckets and bathtubs before each watering. They called it the Watering Comet. Ida always poured it gently over their side of the pot.

Questions

1. Where was the Mossfolk observatory?

_____

_____

2. What did the astronomers think the silver comet was?

_____

_____

3. What was the comet really?

_____

_____

4. On which days did Ida water the plants?

_____

_____

5. Why could the astronomers never tell when the comet would come?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Mossfolk put out buckets?

_____

_____

Words to know

observatory: a building used for studying the sky
moss: a soft, green plant that grows in thick patches
comet: a ball of ice and dust that glows as it moves across the sky
dependable: able to be trusted to happen the same way

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Triangle group

On the balcony of apartment 4B sat a clay flowerpot, and in the pot grew a thick cushion of green moss. Inside the moss, hidden from every giant, lived the Mossfolk astronomers. Their observatory was a hollow acorn cap with a thimble-sized telescope pointed at the sky.

Every few days something strange happened. A great silver comet roared across the heavens, and a rain of water fell afterward. The astronomers recorded it in their star charts, but they could never predict it. Chief Astronomer Wren worried that the comet might smash their moss valley.

Ida, who lived in 4B, noticed the tiny telescope while she was pulling weeds. She knelt down and squinted. Wren stood on the rim of the acorn cap and waved a flag.

"Please warn us about the comet!" Wren called, in a voice as thin as a whistle.

Ida laughed softly. "That is not a comet," she said. "It's my watering can."

The astronomers went silent, and then they began to cheer. Because Ida watered the plants every Tuesday and Friday, the comet was not wild at all. It was dependable. Wren crossed out the old charts and wrote a new schedule with Tuesday and Friday circled in bright blue ink.

From then on the Mossfolk set out their buckets and bathtubs before each watering. They called the event the Watering Comet, and Ida always poured it gently over their side of the pot.

Questions

1. Where was the Mossfolk observatory?

_____

_____

2. What did the astronomers think the silver comet was?

_____

_____

3. What was the comet really?

_____

_____

4. On which days did Ida water the plants?

_____

_____

5. Why could the astronomers never predict the comet before?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Mossfolk set out buckets after learning the truth?

_____

_____

Words to know

observatory: a building used for studying the sky
moss: a soft, green plant that grows in thick patches
comet: a ball of ice and dust that glows as it moves across the sky
dependable: able to be trusted to happen the same way
predict: to say what will happen before it does

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Square group

On the balcony of apartment 4B sat a weathered clay flowerpot, and in the pot grew a thick cushion of green moss. Deep within the moss, hidden from every giant, lived the Mossfolk astronomers. Their observatory was a hollow acorn cap, and a telescope the size of a thimble pointed up at the sky.

Every few days something peculiar occurred. A great silver comet roared across the heavens, and a shower of water fell soon afterward. The astronomers recorded each visit in their star charts, but they could never predict when the comet would return. Chief Astronomer Wren worried that it might someday smash their moss valley to pieces.

Ida, who lived in apartment 4B, spotted the tiny telescope while she was pulling weeds. She knelt down and squinted at it. Wren climbed onto the rim of the acorn cap and waved a flag frantically.

"Please warn us about the comet!" Wren called, in a voice as thin as a whistle.

Ida laughed softly. "That is not a comet at all," she said. "It's my watering can."

The astronomers fell silent, and then they began to cheer. Because Ida watered her plants every Tuesday and Friday, the comet was not wild after all. It was entirely dependable. Wren crossed out her old charts and wrote a new schedule, with Tuesday and Friday circled in bright blue ink.

From then on the Mossfolk set out their buckets and bathtubs before each watering. They named the event the Watering Comet, and Ida always poured it gently over their side of the pot.

Questions

1. Where was the Mossfolk observatory located?

_____

_____

2. What did the astronomers believe the silver comet was?

_____

_____

3. What was the comet actually?

_____

_____

4. On which days did Ida water her plants?

_____

_____

5. Why had the astronomers never been able to predict the comet?

_____

_____

6. Why did the Mossfolk set out buckets after learning the truth?

_____

_____

Words to know

observatory: a building used for studying the sky
moss: a soft, green plant that grows in thick patches
comet: a ball of ice and dust that glows as it moves across the sky
dependable: able to be trusted to happen the same way
predict: to say what will happen before it does

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Easier · 229 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.9

1. In a hollow acorn cap in the moss of a flowerpot.
2. A comet that might smash their valley.
3. Ida's watering can.
4. Tuesday and Friday.
5. They did not know it came from a person who watered on a schedule.
6. They wanted to collect the water because it came on a regular schedule.

Triangle: The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

This passage · 239 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.5

1. In a hollow acorn cap in the moss of a flowerpot.
2. A comet that could smash their valley.
3. Ida's watering can.
4. Tuesday and Friday.
5. They did not know it came from a person who watered on a schedule.
6. They wanted to collect the water, since it came on a regular schedule.

Square: The Moss Observatory and the Watering Comet

Harder · 260 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.4

1. In a hollow acorn cap in the moss of a flowerpot.
2. A comet that might someday smash their moss valley.
3. Ida's watering can.
4. Tuesday and Friday.
5. They did not realize it came from a person watering on a regular schedule.
6. They wanted to collect the water, which now arrived on a regular schedule.