Name: _____ Date: _____

The Map Written in Mirror Letters

Circle group

Leila found a sketchbook at the bottom of a cedar chest. It was in her grandmother's spare room. Most pages had drawings of flowers. One page had a small map of a yard. It had squares and arrows. A line of writing ran along the bottom. Leila could not read a word.

"The letters face the wrong way," she told her grandmother. "It looks like a code."

Her grandmother laughed and got a hand mirror. "Your great-aunt Odile wrote that way on purpose. She said it made a garden plan feel like a treasure hunt." Leila held the mirror by the page. The words turned around. They said, "Seven steps from the pear tree, then look under the blue bench."

The next morning, Leila walked seven steps from the old pear tree. It still leaned over the back fence. She counted twice. Then she knelt by the faded bench. She dug in the soft soil with a spoon.

The spoon hit a tin box in a plastic bag. Inside were dozens of paper envelopes. Each one had the name of a flower in mirror writing. "Seeds," her grandmother whispered. "Odile saved them from every garden she loved."

They planted the first envelope that afternoon. Leila could hardly wait for spring. Now she knew why someone might hide something good in the ground.

Questions

1. Where did Leila find the sketchbook?

_____

_____

2. Why could Leila not read the writing?

_____

_____

3. How did Leila read the message?

_____

_____

4. What did Leila find under the bench?

_____

_____

5. Why did Great-aunt Odile write in mirror letters?

_____

_____

6. What does the box tell you about Odile?

_____

_____

Words to know

sketchbook: a book of blank pages used for drawing
cedar: a kind of tree whose wood has a strong, pleasant smell
whispered: spoke in a very soft, quiet voice

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 Map Written in Mirror Letters

Triangle group

Leila found the sketchbook at the bottom of a cedar chest in her grandmother's spare room, and most of its pages held delicate drawings of flowers. One page, however, showed a small map of a yard, with squares and arrows and a tidy line of writing along the bottom edge. She could not read a single word of it.

"The letters are facing the wrong way," she told her grandmother. "It looks like some kind of secret code."

Her grandmother laughed and went to find a hand mirror. "Your great-aunt Odile wrote that way on purpose," she explained. "She said it made an ordinary garden plan feel like a treasure hunt." Leila held the mirror beside the page, and the reversed words turned around at once. They read, "Seven steps from the pear tree, then look under the blue bench."

The next morning Leila walked seven careful steps from the old pear tree, which still leaned over the back fence, and she counted a second time to be certain. Then she knelt beside the faded bench and dug into the soft soil with a spoon.

Her spoon struck a tin box that had been wrapped in a plastic bag. Inside were dozens of paper envelopes, each one labeled in mirror writing with the name of a flower. "Seeds," her grandmother whispered. "Odile saved them from every garden she ever loved."

They planted the first envelope that same afternoon. Leila said she could hardly wait for spring, and for the first time she understood why a person might choose to hide something precious in the ground.

Questions

1. Where did Leila find the sketchbook?

_____

_____

2. Why could Leila not read the writing at first?

_____

_____

3. How did Leila read the hidden message?

_____

_____

4. What did Leila find buried under the bench?

_____

_____

5. Why did Great-aunt Odile write in mirror letters?

_____

_____

6. What can you tell about Odile from the box she buried?

_____

_____

Words to know

sketchbook: a book of blank pages used for drawing
cedar: a kind of tree whose wood has a strong, pleasant smell
reversed: turned around so that it faces the other way
labeled: marked with a name or short description
whispered: spoke in a very soft, quiet voice

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 Map Written in Mirror Letters

Square group

Leila discovered the sketchbook at the very bottom of a cedar chest in her grandmother's spare room, and most of its pages displayed delicate pencil drawings of flowers. One particular page, however, contained a small map of a yard, complete with squares and arrows and a tidy line of writing running along the bottom edge. Although she squinted at it for several minutes, she could not read a single word.

"The letters are facing the wrong way," she told her grandmother. "It looks like some kind of secret code."

Her grandmother laughed and hurried off to find a hand mirror. "Your great-aunt Odile wrote that way on purpose," she explained. "She claimed that it made an ordinary garden plan feel like a genuine treasure hunt." Leila held the mirror beside the page, and the reversed words immediately turned around. They read, "Seven steps from the pear tree, then look under the blue bench."

The following morning Leila walked seven careful steps from the old pear tree, which still leaned over the back fence, and she counted a second time to be absolutely certain. Then she knelt beside the faded bench and dug into the soft soil with a spoon.

Her spoon struck a tin box that had been wrapped in a plastic bag. Inside lay dozens of paper envelopes, and each one was labeled in mirror writing with the name of a flower. "Seeds," her grandmother whispered. "Odile saved them from every garden that she ever loved."

They planted the first envelope that same afternoon. Leila declared that she could hardly wait for spring, and for the first time she truly understood why a person might choose to hide something precious in the ground.

Questions

1. Where did Leila discover the sketchbook?

_____

_____

2. Why was Leila unable to read the writing at first?

_____

_____

3. How did Leila decode the hidden message?

_____

_____

4. What did Leila uncover beneath the bench?

_____

_____

5. Why did Great-aunt Odile write in mirror letters?

_____

_____

6. What does the buried box reveal about Odile?

_____

_____

Words to know

sketchbook: a book of blank pages used for drawing
cedar: a kind of tree whose wood has a strong, pleasant smell
reversed: turned around so that it faces the other way
labeled: marked with a name or short description
whispered: spoke in a very soft, quiet voice

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 Map Written in Mirror Letters

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

Circle: The Map Written in Mirror Letters

Easier · 223 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 2.8

1. At the bottom of a cedar chest in her grandmother's spare room.
2. The letters were written backward, in mirror writing.
3. She held a hand mirror next to the page.
4. A tin box full of labeled envelopes of flower seeds.
5. She thought it made a garden plan feel like a treasure hunt.
6. She loved gardens and saved seeds from every one.

Triangle: The Map Written in Mirror Letters

This passage · 266 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.9

1. At the bottom of a cedar chest in her grandmother's spare room.
2. The letters were written backward, in mirror writing.
3. She held a hand mirror beside the page.
4. A tin box full of labeled envelopes of flower seeds.
5. She thought it made a plain garden plan feel like a treasure hunt.
6. She loved gardens and wanted to save seeds from every one.

Square: The Map Written in Mirror Letters

Harder · 285 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.3

1. At the bottom of a cedar chest in her grandmother's spare room.
2. The letters were written backward, in mirror writing.
3. She held a hand mirror beside the page.
4. A tin box full of labeled envelopes of flower seeds.
5. She believed it made an ordinary garden plan feel like a treasure hunt.
6. She loved gardens and wanted to preserve seeds from every one of them.