Name: _____ Date: _____

The Shortcut That Took Three Days

Circle group

Everyone in Pickering County knew that Rufus Dale could not resist a shortcut. If the road to the feed store bent left, Rufus went straight through a cornfield to save four minutes. If a bridge was closed, he took it as a test. His neighbors thought this was charming for years. Then one morning he said he had found the best shortcut ever, to the county fair.

He set off at sunrise with a sandwich and a happy whistle. The shortcut began as a dirt track. Then it became a thin trail around a hill. That led to a meadow, which led to a river. Rufus crossed it on the back of a patient cow. By noon he had passed two towns he had never heard of. By evening, said the story, he climbed a mountain so tall that the sun was setting on one side while it was still afternoon on the other. His sandwich ran out. He began to think the fair was in a different state.

On the third morning he came out of the woods. He was at the same crossroads where he began! A farmer leaning on a fence asked if he was lost. Rufus said he was just taking the scenic route. The fair was only a twelve-minute drive down the main road. Rufus laughed so hard he nearly fell over. From then on he asked for directions first. His trail is now a walking path. A wooden sign says, "The Long Way Around. Do Not Hurry."

Questions

1. What could Rufus Dale not resist?

_____

_____

2. How did Rufus cross the river?

_____

_____

3. Where was Rufus on the third morning?

_____

_____

4. How far was the fair on the main road?

_____

_____

5. Why is this story a tall tale?

_____

_____

6. What did Rufus learn?

_____

_____

Words to know

shortcut: a quicker way to get somewhere than the usual way
meadow: a field of grass and wildflowers
scenic: having beautiful views of nature
crossroads: a place where two roads cross each other

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 Shortcut That Took Three Days

Triangle group

Everyone in Pickering County agreed that Rufus Dale could not resist a shortcut. If the road to the feed store bent left, Rufus believed that going straight through a cornfield would save at least four minutes. If a bridge was closed, he took it as a personal challenge. His neighbors found this charming for years, until the morning he announced that he had discovered the greatest shortcut ever to the county fair.

He set off at sunrise with a sandwich and a confident whistle. The shortcut began as a pleasant dirt track and then turned into a narrow trail that wound around a hill, which led to a meadow, which led to a river that Rufus crossed on the back of a very patient cow. By noon he had passed through two towns that he had never heard of. By evening, according to the story, he had climbed a mountain so tall that the sun was setting on one side while it was still afternoon on the other. His sandwich ran out, and he began to suspect that the fair was in a different state.

On the third morning he stumbled out of the woods and found himself at the very same crossroads where he had started. A farmer leaning on a fence asked him politely whether he was lost. Rufus replied that he was merely taking the scenic route. The county fair, it turned out, was only a twelve-minute drive down the main road. Rufus laughed so hard that he nearly fell over, and from that day he asked for directions before choosing a shortcut. The trail he blazed is now a popular walking path, with a wooden sign that says, "The Long Way Around. Do Not Hurry."

Questions

1. What could Rufus Dale not resist?

_____

_____

2. How did Rufus cross the river?

_____

_____

3. Where did Rufus end up on the third morning?

_____

_____

4. How far away was the fair by the main road?

_____

_____

5. Why is the story called a tall tale?

_____

_____

6. What lesson did Rufus learn from his adventure?

_____

_____

Words to know

shortcut: a quicker way to get somewhere than the usual way
confident: feeling sure that you are right
meadow: a field of grass and wildflowers
scenic: having beautiful views of nature
crossroads: a place where two roads cross each other

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 Shortcut That Took Three Days

Square group

Everyone in Pickering County agreed that Rufus Dale was physically incapable of resisting a shortcut. If the road to the feed store curved to the left, Rufus was convinced that cutting straight through a cornfield would save at least four minutes. If a bridge happened to be closed, he regarded it as a personal challenge. His neighbors found this endearing for years, until the morning he proudly announced that he had discovered the greatest shortcut in history, leading directly to the county fair.

He set off at sunrise with a sandwich and a confident whistle. The shortcut began as a pleasant dirt track, then narrowed into a winding trail that curled around a hill, which led to a meadow, which led to a river that Rufus crossed on the back of a remarkably patient cow. By noon he had passed through two towns that he had never heard of. By evening, according to the legend, he had climbed a mountain so towering that the sun was setting on one side while it was still afternoon on the other. His sandwich ran out, and he began to suspect that the fair was located in an entirely different state.

On the third morning he stumbled out of the woods and discovered that he had returned to the very crossroads where he had started. A farmer leaning against a fence politely inquired whether he was lost. Rufus replied that he was merely enjoying the scenic route. The county fair, it emerged, was only a twelve-minute drive along the main road. Rufus laughed so hard that he nearly toppled over, and from that day forward he asked for directions before choosing a shortcut. The trail he blazed is now a beloved walking path, marked by a wooden sign that reads, "The Long Way Around. Do Not Hurry."

Questions

1. What was Rufus Dale unable to resist?

_____

_____

2. How did Rufus cross the river?

_____

_____

3. Where did Rufus find himself on the third morning?

_____

_____

4. How far away was the fair along the main road?

_____

_____

5. What makes the story a tall tale?

_____

_____

6. What lesson did Rufus take from his adventure?

_____

_____

Words to know

shortcut: a quicker way to get somewhere than the usual way
confident: feeling sure that you are right
meadow: a field of grass and wildflowers
scenic: having beautiful views of nature
crossroads: a place where two roads cross each other

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 Shortcut That Took Three Days

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

Circle: The Shortcut That Took Three Days

Easier · 254 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 3.3

1. He could not resist a shortcut.
2. On the back of a patient cow.
3. At the same crossroads where he began.
4. About a twelve-minute drive.
5. It exaggerates, like a mountain where the sun sets on one side while it is still afternoon on the other.
6. To ask for directions before taking a shortcut.

Triangle: The Shortcut That Took Three Days

This passage · 290 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.2

1. He could not resist a shortcut.
2. On the back of a very patient cow.
3. At the same crossroads where he had started.
4. About a twelve-minute drive.
5. It exaggerates, such as a mountain with the sun setting on one side while it is still afternoon on the other.
6. To ask for directions before choosing a shortcut.

Square: The Shortcut That Took Three Days

Harder · 304 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 8.6

1. He was unable to resist a shortcut.
2. On the back of a remarkably patient cow.
3. At the very crossroads where he had started.
4. Only about a twelve-minute drive.
5. It exaggerates, such as a mountain so towering that the sun sets on one side while it is still afternoon on the other.
6. He learned to ask for directions before choosing a shortcut.