



Companion Teaching Activities

*To the historical fiction
serialized story for young readers*

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Produced by the Missouri Press Foundation



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The Big Ditch

Companion Teacher Guide

Part I – Elementary Activities

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“The Big Ditch,” by Kay Hively, is packed with many great teaching opportunities. The following Constructed Response Items and Performance Tasks were written to assist teachers and parents. The questions are aligned to The Missouri Show-Me Standards and Grade Level Expectations. Scoring guides are also included. The questions are suitable for most elementary students and can be adapted to other grade levels.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 1-8

Writing Prompt

GLE: Writing 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 3A, 3B, 3C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA3, SS2, SS5, CA4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

Douglas and his family are moving to Panama for a year. Pretend you are Douglas and keep a journal of your trip. Write a journal entry for each chapter. Each journal entry should include at least two important events or details and a logical date. Make sure you use correct grammar and spelling.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 1-8

Writing Prompt

Scoring Guide

GLE: Writing 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 3A, 3B, 3C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA3, SS2, SS5, CA4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

Journal Writing

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Events	Includes at least 2 important events/details for all 8 chapters.	Includes at least 2 important events/details for 6-7 chapters.	Includes at least 2 important events/details for 3-5 chapters.	Includes at least 2 important events/details for 1-3 chapters.
Date	All journal entries include a logical date.	6-7 journal entries include a logical date.	3-5 journal entries contain a logical date.	1-3 journal entries contain a logical date.
Grammar & spelling (conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes few errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes some errors in grammar and/or spelling that may be distracting to the reader.	Writer makes many errors in grammar and/or spelling.

THE BIG DITCH
Chapter 1

Name _____
Date _____

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C
Standards: CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, S8, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Why was the Taylor family moving to Panama? Why were other Americans already there?

2. What is “The Big Ditch” and why was it being built?

3. How did Douglas feel about going to Panama? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

4. The story took place in 1906. How do you think things were different back then?

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 1—Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, S8, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

1. Why was the Taylor family moving to Panama? Why were other Americans already there?

2pts. States that Douglas' father was going to Panama to help cure Malaria and other Americans were there to build the Panama Canal.

1pt. Answers part of the question correctly.

0pt. Other

2. What is “The Big Ditch” and why was it being built?

2pts. States that the big ditch is a canal being built so that ships can travel back and forth from the Atlantic to the Pacific easily.

1pt. Answers part of the question correctly

0pts. Other

3. How did Douglas feel about going to Panama? Use details from the story to explain your answer

2pt. States how Douglas feels about going to Panama and uses at least 2 details to support his/her answer.

1pt. States how Douglas feels about Panama and uses one detail to support his/her answer

0pt. Other

4. The story took place in 1906. How do you think things were different back then?

2pts. Names at least two things that were different in the early 1900s

1pt. Names one thing that was different in the 1900s

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 1

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A, SS2A

Standards: CA3, CA4, SS2, S8, G1.4, G1.5, G1.10, G2.1, G4.1, G4.3, G4.7

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

Look through the newspaper for pictures of man-made items that make our lives easier. Cut and glue the pictures on a separate piece of paper, then describe how each item makes life easier.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 1-- Scoring Guide

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A, SS2A

Standards: CA3, CA4, SS2, S8, G1.4, G1.5, G1.10, G2.1, G4.1, G4.3, G4.7

Look through the newspaper for pictures of man-made items that make life easier. Cut and glue the pictures on a separate piece of paper, then describe how each item makes life easier.

4pts. Includes 4 man-made items with accurate description of how each item makes life easier.

3pts. Includes 3 man-made items with accurate description of how each item makes life easier.

2pts. Includes 2 man-made items with accurate description of how each item makes life easier.

1pt. Includes 1 man-made item with accurate description of how item makes life easier.

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 2

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA2, CA4, SS5, S3, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Doug daydreamed about animals he might encounter in Panama. Name at least 2 other animals Douglas might find in Panama.

2. Locate Panama on a map. What do you think the climate might be like? What kind of clothes should Douglas pack?

3. Doug was allowed to take one small box of his things with him to Panama. If you were moving for a year and could only take a small box of items, what would you take? Why? Complete the chart below.

Item	Reason for Taking Item

4. What is a voyage? Describe a voyage that you would like to take.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 2--Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA2, CA4, SS5, S3, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

1. Doug daydreamed about animals he might encounter in Panama. Name at least 2 other animals Douglas might find in Panama.

2pts. Lists more than two animals that could be found in a tropical area

1pt. Lists 1-2 animals that could be found in a tropical area

0pt. Other

2. Locate Panama on a map. What do you think the climate might be like? What kind of clothes should Douglas pack?

2pts. Describes climate as warm or hot and suggests appropriate clothing.

1pt. Describes climate as warm or hot **or** suggests appropriate clothing.

0pts. Other

3. Doug was allowed to take one small box of his things with him to Panama. If you were moving for a year and could only take a small box of items, what would you take? Why?

2pts. Names three items and states appropriate reasons for taking the items

1pt. Names one or two items and states appropriate reason for taking the item or names two or more items without stating reasons for taking the items

0pt. Other

4. What is a voyage? Describe a voyage that you would like to take.

2pts. Gives detailed description of a voyage that he/she would like to take

1pt. Names a voyage that he/she would like to take

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 2

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 1H, Social Studies. 2A, 5E

Standards: CA1, CA4, S8 G1.2, G1.4, G1.5, G2.1

Name _____

Date _____

Name the types of transportation that have been used in the story.

PROMPT

Locate pictures and words of forms of transportation in the newspaper. Cut, paste, and label the pictures and words below. You may use a separate piece of paper.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 2

Performance Task

Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1H, Social Studies. 2A, 5E

Standards: CA1, CA4, S8 G1.2, G1.4, G1.5, G2.1

Name the types of transportation that have been used in the story.

2pts. Names 2 or more types of transportation that have been used in the story

1pt. Names 1 type of transportation that has been used in the story

0pts. Attempts

Locate pictures and words of forms of transportation in the newspaper. Cut, paste, and label the pictures and words below. You may use a separate piece of paper.

4pts. Includes at least 4 pictures or words of transportation that are accurately labeled

3pts. Includes 3 pictures or words of transportation that are accurately labeled

2pts. Includes 2 pictures or words of transportation that are accurately labeled

1pt. Includes 1 picture or word of transportation that is accurately labeled

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Name _____

Chapter 3

Date _____

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, S8, SS5, H/PE3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. What caused Malaria and Yellow Fever to spread? What was being done to solve the problem?

2. What were some of the things that made Doug's trip on the ship exciting?

3. Panama and Cuba are both tropical areas. Use a map to locate other tropical areas. List at least four.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

4. Do you think Mr. Taylor is a good doctor? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 3

Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, S8, SS5, H/PE3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

1. What caused Malaria and Yellow Fever to spread? What was being done to solve the problem?

2pts. Explains that mosquitoes are causing the diseases to spread and workers are trying to find ways to get rid of the mosquitoes.

1pt. Names the cause or the solution

0pt. Other

2. What were some of the things that made Doug's trip on the ship exciting?

2pts. Names at least 2 things that made Doug's trip exciting.

1pt. Names at least 1 thing that made Doug's trip exciting.

0pts. Other

3. Panama and Cuba are both tropical areas. Use a map to locate other tropical areas. List at least four.

3pts. Lists 4 tropical areas.

2pt. Lists 2-3 tropical areas.

1pt. Lists 1 tropical area.

0pts Other

4. Do you think Mr. Taylor is a good doctor? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

2pts. States that Dr. Taylor is a good doctor and uses adequate details to support answer

1pt. States that Dr. Taylor is a good doctor but does not use adequate details to support answer

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 3

Performance Task

Scoring Guide

GLE: Writing 2A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 3C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS5, G1.6, G1.8, G2.1, G2.2

PROMPT

List facts and opinions about Panama in the chart below.

Facts	Opinions
4pts. Names more than 2 facts and 2 opinions. 3pts. Names 2 facts and opinions. 2pts. Names 1 fact and 2 opinions or 2 facts and 1 opinion. 1pt. Names one fact and/or one opinion.	

You are a travel agent, and your boss giving a prize to the agent who sells the most trips to Panama. Use your facts and opinions to write a classified ad for the newspaper, persuading someone to purchase a trip to Panama.

4pts. Classified ad uses many facts and opinions to promote a vacation to Panama and has few grammatical and spelling errors

3pts. Classified ad uses facts and opinions to promote a vacation to Panama. It may have some grammatical and spelling errors that are not distracting to the reader

2pts. Classified ad uses facts or opinions to promote a vacation to Panama. It may have some grammatical and spelling errors that are distracting to the reader

1pt. Attempts to write a classified ad promoting a trip to Panama

0pt. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Name _____

Chapter 4

Date _____

GLE: Reading 1E, 1G, 1H, 1I, 2B, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Why do the plants grow so fast in the jungle? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

2. Compare and contrast Panama to where you live. Name at least two likenesses and differences.

3. Locate synonyms for the following words in this chapter.

1. baggage _____

2. sanitary _____

4. What does the simile “yellow feathers floating like balloons” mean?

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 4

Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1E, 1G, 1H, 1I, 2B, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

1. Why do the plants grow so fast in the jungle? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

2pts. Uses 2 or more details to explain why plants grow fast in the jungle

1pt. Uses 1 detail to explain why plants grow fast in the jungle

0pts. Other

2. Compare and contrast Panama to where you live. Name at least two likenesses and differences.

3pts. Compares Panama to hometown using at least 2 likenesses and differences

2pts. Compares Panama to hometown using 1 likeness. Or, compares using only 2 likenesses or 2 differences

1pt. Attempts to compare Panama to hometown using 1 likeness or one difference

0pt. Other

3. Locate synonyms for the following words in this chapter.

2pts. Names 2 correct synonyms

1pt. Names 1 correct synonym

0pts. Other

4. What does the simile “yellow feathers floating like balloons” mean?

2pts. Gives a detailed description of what the simile means

1pt. Gives a vague description of what the simile means

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 4

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 2B, 1H, 1I, 3B

Standards: CA1, CA3, CA4, G1.4, G1.6, G1.8, G2.1

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

A simile is a comparison using “like” or “as.” The simile “yellow feathers floating like balloons” was used in this chapter. Look for similes in the newspaper. Paste the similes in the chart below then write what you think each simile means.

SIMILE	MEANING

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 4—Scoring Guide

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 2B, 1H, 1I, 3B

Standards: CA1, CA3, CA4, G1.4, G1.6, G1.8, G2.1

PROMPT

A simile is a comparison using “like” or “as.” The simile “yellow feathers floating like balloons” was used in this chapter. Look for similes in the newspaper. Paste the similes in the chart below then write what you think each simile means.

SIMILE	MEANING
4pt.	Locates 4 similes and gives an accurate meaning for each.
3pts.	Locates 3 similes and gives an accurate meaning for each.
2pts.	Locates 2 similes and gives an accurate meaning for each.
1pt.	Locates 1 simile and gives and accurate meaning.
0pt.	Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 5

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C, Social Studies 4A

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, S8, SS6, H/PE3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Name at least two things workers and community members did to try to get rid of mosquitoes.

2. Doug heard strange noises as he went to sleep. What kind of noises do you think Doug was hearing? What kind of noises do you hear when you go to sleep?

3. What do you think will happen if the doctors fail to prevent Malaria and Yellow Fever?

4. What services did the following people provide?

Dr. Taylor _____

Maria _____

Shopkeepers _____

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 5—Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C, Social Studies 4A

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, S3, S8, SS6, H/PE3, G1.4, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G4.1

1. Name at least two things workers and community members did to try to get rid of mosquitoes.

2pts. Names two things workers and community members did to try to get rid of mosquitoes

1pts. Names 1 thing workers and community members did to try to get rid of mosquitoes

0 pts. Other

2. Doug heard strange noises as he went to sleep. What kind of noises do you think Doug was hearing? What kind of noises do you hear when you go to sleep?

2pts. Gives logical description of noises Doug and he/she might hear when going to sleep

1pt. Gives logical description of noises Doug **or** he/she might hear when going to sleep

0pts. Other

3. What do you think will happen if the doctors fail to prevent Malaria and Yellow Fever?

2pts. Gives a logical description of what might happen if doctors fail to prevent the diseases

1pt. Gives general description of what might happen if doctors fail to prevent the diseases

0pts. Other

4. What services did the following people provide?

2pts. Correctly identifies services all three people provide

1pt. Correctly identifies services 1-2 people provide

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 5

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 1F, 1G, 1I, 3D, Social Studies 4A

Standards: CA3, S3, S8, SS6, G1.4, G1.6

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

Workers provided a service as they fought the mosquito population. Look through the newspaper for words and pictures of people providing services. Make a collage with your pictures and words on a separate sheet of paper. Include at least 5 pictures and words.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 5—Scoring Guide

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 1F, 1G, 1I, 3D, Social Studies 4A

Standards: CA3, S3, S8, SS6, G1.4, G1.6

PROMPT

Workers provided a service as they fought the mosquito population. Look through the newspaper for words and pictures of people providing services. Make a collage with your pictures and words on a separate sheet of paper.

4pts. Collage includes at least 5 pictures and words that show people providing services.

3pts. Collage includes at least 4 pictures and words that show people providing services.

2pts. Collage includes 2-3 pictures and/or words that show people providing services.

1pt. Collage includes 1 picture or word that shows someone providing a service.

0pt. Other—May include words and pictures that don't show people providing services.

THE BIG DITCH

Name _____

Chapter 6

Date _____

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C, Social Studies 2A, 5E

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, S4, G1.5, G1.6, G1.8, G4.1

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. What was the most important chore for children in Panama? Why was this chore important?

2. What kind of chores do you do at home? Why are they important?

3. Name two dangers workers faced while building the Panama Canal.

4. What does a large red cross symbolize? _____

Complete the chart below. Name some other symbols and tell what they represent. An example has been done for you.

Symbol	What the Symbol Represents
1. Skull and crossbones	poison
2.	
3.	
4.	

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 6

Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C, Social Studies 2A, 5E

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, S4, G1.5, G1.6, G1.8, G4.1

1. What was the most important chore for children in Panama? Why was this chore important?

2pts. States that keeping the area clean and free of water is the most important chore because it helps keep away the mosquitoes

1pt. States that keeping the area clean and free of water is the most important chore or mentions keeping away the mosquitoes

0pts. Other

2. What kind of chores do you do at home? Why are they important?

2pts. Names at least two household chores and gives a logical explanation why they are important

1pts. Names one household chore and gives an explanation why it is important

0pts. Other

3. Name two dangers workers faced while building the Panama Canal.

2pts. Lists two dangers of building the Panama Canal

1pt. Lists 1 danger of building the Panama Canal

0pts. Other

4. What does a large red cross symbolize? Hospital (1pt.)

Complete the chart below. Name some other symbols and tell what they represent. An example has been done for you.

3pts. Includes 3 symbols and correctly identifies what they represent

2pt. Includes 2 symbols and correctly identifies what they represent

1pt. Includes 1 symbol and correctly identifies what they represent or includes 2-3 symbols but does not correctly identify what they represent

0pts. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 6

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A

Standards: CA3

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

Locate pictures of symbols from the newspaper. Cut and paste them below. Label each picture with what the symbol represents.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 6

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A

Standards: CA3

Locate pictures of symbols from the newspaper. Cut and paste them below. Label each picture with what the symbol represents.

4pts. Includes at least four pictures with the correct labels

3pts. Includes at least three pictures with the correct labels

2pts. Includes at least two pictures with the correct labels or includes 3-4 pictures of symbols with inaccurate or no labels.

1pt. Includes one picture with the correct label or 2 pictures of symbols with inaccurate or no labels.

0pt. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Name _____

Chapter 7

Date _____

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS8, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. Why would the president be visiting Panama? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

2. What were Maria's plans to prepare for the President's visit?

3. How did Douglas help at the hospital?

4. If you were Douglas, how would you feel if you ran into the President? Explain your answer.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 7

Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS8, G1.5, G1.6, G4.1

1. Why would the president be visiting Panama? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

2pts. Uses at least two logical details from the story to explain why the president would visit Panama

1pt. Uses at least two logical details from the story to explain why the president would visit Panama

0pts. Other

2. What were Maria's plans to prepare for the President's visit?

2pts. Names at least two things Maria plans to do to prepare for the President's visit

1pt. Names one thing Maria plans to do to prepare for the President's visit

0pts. Other

3. How did Douglas help at the hospital?

2pts. Gives a detailed description of what Douglas does to help at the hospital.

1pt. Gives a general description of what Douglas does to help at the hospital.

0pt. Other

4. If you were Douglas, how would you feel if you ran into the president? Explain your answer.

2pts. States feelings about running into the President with a logical explanation

1pt. Attempts to state feelings about running into the President—may be general

0pt. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 7

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A, 3C, Writing 2F, 3B

Standards: CA1, CA3, CA4, S3, SS6, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

There are many people doing good for others in “The Big Ditch.” Look through the local newspaper for an article about someone doing good for others. Pretend you are a reporter and answer the following questions. Cut out the article and attach it to this paper.

Who? Who is the article about?

What? What is this person doing for others?

When? When does this person help others?

Where? Where does this person help others?

Why? Why does this person help others?

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 7—Scoring Guide

Performance Task

GLE: Reading 3A, 3C, Writing 2F, 3B

Standards: CA1, CA3, CA4, S3, SS6, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

There are many people doing good for others in “The Big Ditch.” Look through the local newspaper for an article about someone doing good for others. Pretend you are a reporter and answer the following questions. Cut out the article and attach it to this paper.

Who? Who is the article about?

1pt. States who article is about

0pt. Other

What? What is this person doing for others?

2pt. Gives detailed description of what the person does for others

1pt. Gives general description of what the person does for others

0pt. Other

When? When does this person help others?

2pt. Gives detailed description of when the person helps others

1pt. Gives general description of when the person helps others

0pt. Other

Where? Where does this person help others?

2pt. Gives detailed description of where the person helps others

1pt. Gives general description of where the person helps others

0pt. Other

Why? Why does this person help others?

2pt. Gives detailed description of why the person helps others

1pt. Gives general description of why the person helps others

0pt. Other

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 8

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, G1.5, G1.6

Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences.

1. How would you feel if you met the President? What would you say to him? Why?

2. Do you think Douglas was proud to be an American? Use details from the story to explain your answer.

3. Douglas told his friends he was anxious to play stickball. What is stickball?

4. What do you think was Douglas' favorite part of living in Panama? Explain your answer.

THE BIG DITCH

Chapter 8—Scoring Guide

GLE: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, G1.5, G1.6

1. How would you feel if you met the President? What would you say to him? Why?

3pts. States feelings about meeting the President and what he/she would say, and explains why

2pt. Answers 2 parts of the question correctly

1pt. Answers 1 part of the question correctly

0pt. Other

2. Do you think Douglas was proud to be an American? Use details to from the story to explain your answer.

3pts. States that Douglas was proud to be an American and uses details from the story to explain answer.

2pt. States that Douglas was proud to be an American and uses one detail to explain answer.

1pt. States that Douglas was proud to be an American

0pts. Other

3. Douglas told his friends he was anxious to play stickball. What is stickball?

2pts. Gives detailed description of stickball

1pt. Gives general description of stickball

0pts. Other

4. What do you think was Douglas' favorite part of living in Panama? Explain your answer.

2pts. States opinion of Douglas' favorite part with logical explanation

1pt. States opinion of Douglas' favorite part with no explanation, or explanation is vague

0pts. Other

THE BEST STORYTELLER

Chapter 8

Performance Task

GLE: Writing 1A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 3A, 3D

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

Name _____

Date _____

PROMPT

Pretend you are Douglas. Write a letter to your friends in America telling them about Panama and all of the exciting things you did there. Make sure you include the five parts of a friendly letter.

THE BEST STORYTELLER

Chapter 8—Scoring Guide

Performance Task

GLE: Writing 1A, 2B, 2C, 2D, 2E, 2F, 3A, 3D

Standards: CA1, CA2, CA4, SS2, SS5, G1.5, G1.6, G2.1, G2.2

Letter Writing

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Format	Complies with all the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with almost all the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with several of the requirements for a friendly letter.	Complies with less than 75% of the requirements for a friendly letter.
Details	Includes more than 4 details about Panama or events that happened while Douglas was there.	Includes 3 details about Panama or events that happened while Douglas was there.	Includes 2 details about Panama or events that happened while Douglas was there	Includes 1 detail about Panama or an event that happened while Douglas was there
Grammar & spelling (conventions)	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar and/or spelling.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar and/or spelling	Writer makes more than 4 errors in grammar and/or spelling.

The Big Ditch

Companion Teacher Guide

Part II – Secondary Activities

By: Jennifer Wirthwein—Gifted Education Teacher
Washington Public Schools
Washington, Missouri

The Big Ditch is a lively adventure story of a young boy, Douglas Taylor, as he accompanies his family to Panama to help the workers who are building the canal. This guide has:

- discussion prompts to allow students to exchange information and ideas
- constructed response questions to give students practice responding to literature
- newspaper related activities, to encourage them to actively engage with other parts of the newspaper
- character building questions and activities to nurture and enhance positive traits
- research to extend the connections from the text

All of the activities have been aligned to the Show-Me Standards as well as the Grade Level Expectations.

Chapter 1

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:4, 1:5, 1:8, 1:10, 2:1, 2:3, 3:1, 3:4, 3:6, 3:7, 4:1, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, SC3, SC4, HPE3

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1I, 2C, 3C, Writing 3D

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Doug Taylor was facing a big move. Have you ever had to move? How did you feel about the experience? What advice would you give Doug?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. What is the tone of this passage? How does the author develop the tone? Is it effective? Why?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. Dr. Gorgas and Dr. Taylor were working to fight the disease of malaria in Panama. What disease poses a current threat to your country? Your state? Your local region? What steps are being taken to prevent or cure the disease? Find an article in the news and summarize it below.

Character Counts: Good character can be found in many different people in many different ways. If you had to choose one character from this passage who exemplified good character choices, who would you choose? Why?

Further Research: Doug Taylor learned about the vegetation and animals found in the tropical region of Panama. Find at least five examples of plants and animals prevalent in Panama today and list them below.

Plants: _____

Animals: _____

Create a poster with pictures to illustrate the examples listed above.

Chapter 2—Going to Sea

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6, 1:9, 1:10, 2:1, 2:3, 2:7, 3:1, 3:2, 3:3, 3:4, 4:1, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, SC3, HPE7

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1H, 1I, 3A, 3C

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Doug was given only one container to pack for the move. If you were going to move away and could only take one small container, what would you choose to pack? Why?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. What is the main idea of this passage? Why is it important to the story?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. While traveling to Panama, Doug encountered a freight wagon, a buggy and a ship. What forms of transportation can you find in the paper? Compare and contrast these forms of transportation with those mentioned in this reading passage. Create a Venn Diagram or T-Chart to display your answer.

Character Counts: Doug felt homesick before he even set foot on the ship bound for Panama. This indicates he has fond and happy memories of his neighbors and community. List three things you can do to be a good neighbor.

Further Research: Poisonous snakes are the topic of Doug's daydreams as he begins his journey to Panama. How can you determine if a snake is poisonous? What can you do if you encounter a poisonous snake? Create a brochure about snake safety. Include 10 facts and three pictures. Share the brochures with your class.

Chapter 3—Next Stop: Panama

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:2, 1:5, 2:1, 2:3, 4:1, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, MA1, HPE2

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1G, 1H, 1I, 2C, 3C Writing 3C

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Mosquitoes were a major threat to the people in Panama. Are mosquitoes still seen as a danger today? How do people tend to react about mosquitoes? How would you feel if you were on the boat headed to Panama?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. What conflict is mentioned in the passage? How do the characters respond to the conflict?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. Doug was looking forward to dinner, his last big meal on the ship. Imagine you were in charge of preparing dinner for your family. What foods would you choose? Take in to consideration your families' likes and dislikes, as well as nutritional value. Imagine you have \$30 to spend for your family, and use the newspaper ads to shop for the necessary ingredients. Cut and paste your choices below.

Character Counts: It was important to Doug to keep in touch with his friends back home. Imagine that you were Doug's friend and had received a letter detailing his fears of living in Panama. Write a letter to Doug and offer words of encouragement and support.

Further Research: Dr. Taylor tells his son about the famous Dr. Walter Reed. If you were going to interview Dr. Reed, what questions would you ask? List five questions and find as many answers as you can. Share your findings with the class.

Chapter 4—A New Life

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6, 1:9, 2:1, 2:3, 2:5, 3:1, 3:4, 3:6, 3:7, 4:1, 4:6, 4:7, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, HPE2, HPE7

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1D, 1E, 1H, 1I, 2B, 2C, 3C

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. What is Doug’s first impression of Panama? Have you ever been to a foreign country? What was it like? Would you like to visit Panama someday?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. The living area at the top of the hill was said to be “clean and sanitary.” What does “sanitary” mean? How do you know?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. From the train, Doug watched the birds floating like balloons. A simile compares two things using “like” or “as.” Work with a partner to find 10 similes in the newspaper. Create a class list. How can you incorporate similes to your writing? How do similes help to create a better story?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)
- 9)
- 10)

Character Counts: Dr. Gorgas is a famous man of these times. His medical expertise helped many people. What important character traits should a doctor possess? Why?

Further Research: The Taylor family had to endure intense heat while in Panama. If you are going to be exposed to heat, what precautionary measures are necessary to keep yourself safe? Research this important topic and create a skit to perform for your class.

Chapter 5—Good Health

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:3, 1:4, 1:5, 1:6, 1:8, 1:10, 2:1, 2:3, 3:1, 3:4, 3:6, 4:1, 4:3, 4:7, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, HPE3, MA1

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1H, 1I, 2C, 3C

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Doug met other young boys right away. What do you think were some of the positive and negative aspects of making new friends in a strange country? What advice would you give Doug?

Constructed Response: List three important events from this chapter. Explain why each event was important.

1)

2)

3)

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. Maria's cooking was said to be delicious. Find a recipe in the newspaper. Double the ingredients listed and create a shopping list. Estimate the cost of the needed ingredients. Compare prices with the class.

Character Counts: Doug seems eager to help his Dad at the hospital. What adult in your life is a positive role model? What can you do to help that adult? Why is it important to help others?

Further Research: Dr. Taylor traveled to Panama to fight the deadly diseases of yellow fever and malaria. Research these diseases: the causes, symptoms, diagnosis, prevention, treatment, etc. Present an oral report to the class.

Chapter 6—Seeing the Ditch

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 15, 1:8, 1:10, 2:1, 2:3, 4:1, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, SS7

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1H, 1I, 2C, 3D

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. School is about to begin for Doug? What feelings do you have when school is about to start? What do you do to prepare?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. What is the main idea of this chapter? How do you know?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. New machinery is arriving to help the men build the ditch. Find an article in the paper that shows how machinery helps our modern society. What type of machinery is used? Why is it important? Summarize the article below.

Character Counts: How is Mario a good friend to Doug? Name a good friend that you have had. What did they do that was helpful? What can you do to be a good friend?

Further Research: Swimming at the beach was a popular past time for the children. Look at a map of Panama. What beach(es) are labeled? Create an advertisement for the beach, designed to attract tourists to the area. Display your ad.

Chapter 7—A Big Surprise

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 1:8, 1:9, 1:10, 2:3, 2:7, 3:5, 4:1, 4:3, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, HPE4, SS7

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1H, 1I, 2C, 3C, Writing 1A, 3D, 3E

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Why was it such an honor to have the American president visit Panama? How would you feel if the president came to visit your school?

Constructed Response: Summarize this chapter into four main events. List the events in chronological order.

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. Today, the President has the responsibility of making visits to many local and foreign places. Find an article about a visit the President made or is about to make. Share the article with the class.

Character Counts: Maria “stood firm” on her wishes to prepare the house for the President. Tell about a time that you “stood firm” to your beliefs.

Further Research: Dr. Taylor wanted the boys to box using Queensbury rules. What are Queensbury rules? What rules are associated with modern boxing? Why are rules important? Write a one page paper detailing the results of your research.

Chapter 8—Going Home

Secondary Activities

Missouri Show-Me Standards: G1:1, 1:2, 1:4, 1:5, 1:8, 1:9, 1:10, 2:3, 2:7, 3:5, 4:1, 4:2, CA1, CA2, CA3, CA4, CA6, SS2, SS5

Grade Level Expectations: Reading 1H, 1I, 2C, 3C

Discussion: Discuss the following with your classmates. Why do you think Doug is feeling such a mix of emotions about returning home to Baltimore? Was there a time in your life that you were feeling conflicting emotions?

Constructed Response: Answer the following using at least two well-formed sentences. How does the author develop the tone and mood of this chapter? What techniques are used?

In the News: Use the newspaper to complete the following. Horseback riding, swimming, boxing and stickball were the sports mentioned in this story. Look at the sports section and make a list of all of the sports that are listed. Create a ratio for the amount of coverage each sport received. (Ex: 3 of 8 stories were about volleyball) Create a ratio for local vs. national sports.

Character Counts: The people of Panama displayed great pride in their county and great respect for America, as well. What can you do to show pride for your country?

Further Research: Research the building of Panama Canal. Create a timeline of important events and share your results with the class.